LIVE | WORK | EXPLORE

ISSUE 20 • FEB/MAR 2023

ROOTLESS LIVING

20 bucket list BOONDOCKING spots

HAPPILY HOMESCHOOLING

Tips and Tricks for Road School

ALTERNATIVE ARTISTS

The Creative Life of Artistic Nomads

ADVENTURE WITH COMPROMISE

How a Marriage Survives Travel

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LIVE

22
Living By the Beat of Our Own Drum
A renovation for a family of five

26
Happily Homeschooling
Family shares their tips and tricks for road school

31
Parked in Paradise
Why you can live in an RV and not travel

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WORK

40
Alternative Artists
Creativity is nurtured on the road for these artistic nomads

48
Crossfit to Cross Country
These gym owners went remote with virtual workouts

51
A Perfect Travel Day
Find out how a family of seven moves

NEWMAR RV RESORTS GUIDE
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Newmarcorp.com/resortsguide23

EXPLORE

54

20 Bucket List Boondocking Spots

Visit these campsites on your next off-grid adventure

67

Adventure with Compromise

How this marriage survives travel

70

5 Underrated National Parks

These parks may surprise you!

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CONTENTS

11 From the Founders

13 **CONTRIBUTORS**
For Digital Nomads, By Digital Nomads

15 The Feed

17 Featured Nomad

18 **“A SIMPLER LIFE”**
Skoolie Reno Helps Couple
Achieve Dreams

21 Spring Snacks

22 Living by the Beat of Our Own Drum

26 **HAPPILY HOMESCHOOLING**
Resources, Tips, and Curriculum Ideas

29 Living Sustainably While Raising Twins

31 **PARKED IN PARADISE**
Stationary RV Living

34 **RV MISHAPS**

38 **HOW I MAKE MONEY ON THE ROAD**

40 **ALTERNATIVE ARTISTS**
How Nomads Create and
Sell Art Remotely

45 **FROM DREAM TO REALITY**
Traveling, Living, and Podcasting
on the Road

48 **FROM CROSSFIT TO CROSS-COUNTRY**
Gym Owners Pivot to
Virtual Workouts

51 **A PERFECT TRAVEL DAY**
How A Family of Seven Handles
Moving Camp

54 20 Bucket List Boondocking Spots

63 Travel Playlists for Long Drive Days

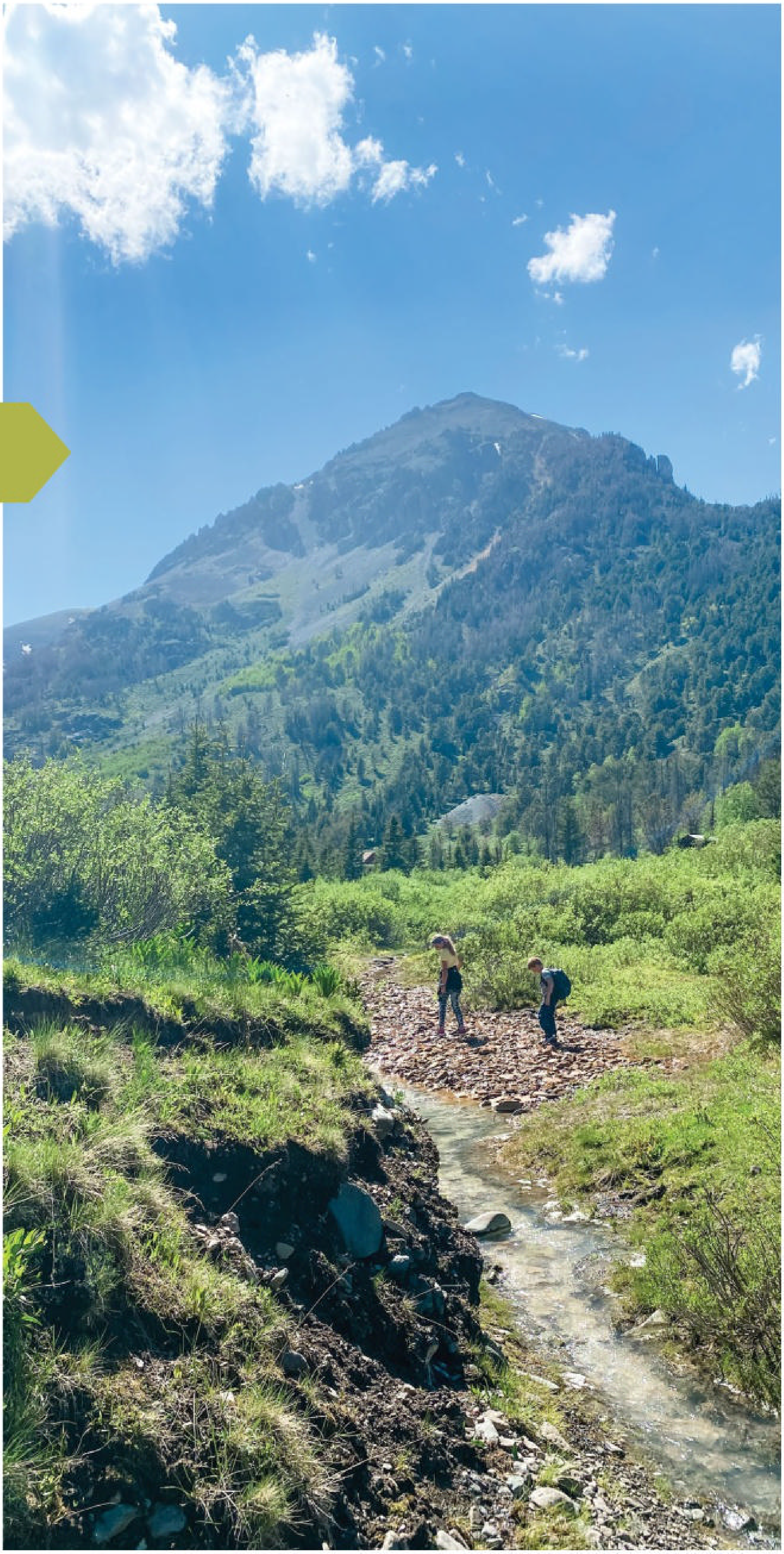
64 **AM I TOO OLD FOR VANLIFE?**
Retiree Vanlifers Tell All

67 **ADVENTURE WITH COMPROMISE**
Marital Balance in Death Valley
National Park

70 5 Underrated National Parks

77 Podcasts for the Drive

78 Gear Guide



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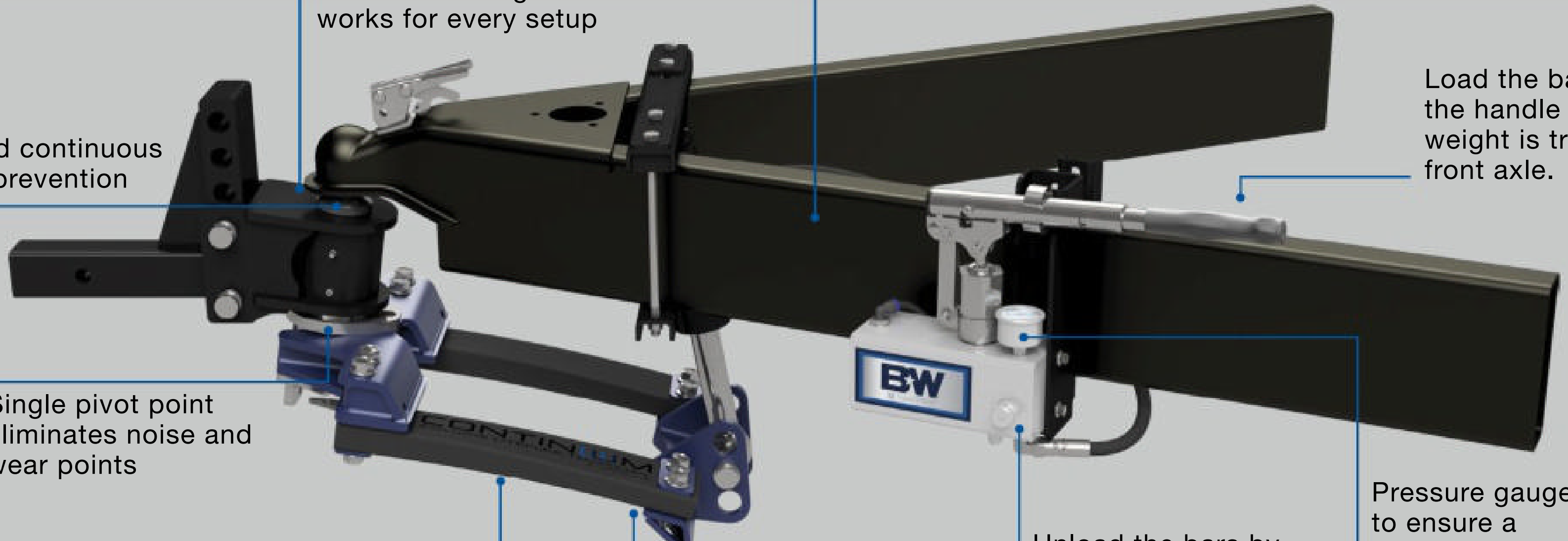

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FROM THE FOUNDERS

I AM WRITING THIS from Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, on what should have been a restful five-day, four-night vacation. But like most of my recent vacations or business trips that have required flying and booking a hotel, I catch myself wondering why I even risk it anymore. This industry is a mess.

It's trendy to talk about all that can go wrong while RVing, and I guess we've been relatively lucky that most of our problems have occurred while traveling via airlines and hotels. But at least when things go bad in an RV, you're in your home, and you can control a lot of the "What now?" moments.

I was delayed a day on this trip, and the airline wouldn't pick up the cost of the hotel I had to stay at in Boston, a city that had nothing to do with my original flight plans. Instead of arriving in the afternoon on the 11th, I arrived on the evening of the 12th, taking away two days of relaxing by the beach or pool. I was frustrated, but I realized this whole experience wasn't nearly as bad for me as it would have been for someone with limited vacation time.

Many people see the word "rootless" and assume that all it means is not owning a sticks and bricks home. But really, it has less to do with planting roots than it does with being stuck in one place. I think of rootless living as being unstuck.

Jobs that only allow a certain amount of vacation time—or worse, ones that you can't even take a break from for a few days—are the definition of stuck. It's almost impossible for people to be rootless if they have a job that requires them to be stuck.

In every issue of Rootless Living, we try to have stories of unique jobs that allow people to work remotely and set their schedules, and our hope is that you get inspired and can find a way to go rootless, if you haven't already.

Until the next issue … stay Rootless.

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The variety of lifestyles in the nomadic community never ceases to amaze me. In this issue, we cover everything from living stationary in an RV to living sustainably on the road with twins to epic boondocking campsites across the country and more! The one guiding principle that all of these people have in common is that everyone is living a minimalist lifestyle and looking for more experiences over things. In today's society, that requires conscious effort, so with this issue, if you're hoping to break free of the corporate nine-to-five, I hope you'll be inspired by the fact that it doesn't matter how you do it, just that you find a way that works for you. If you have an article that you want to share with our readers, please email us at collab@rootlessliving.com - we'd love to hear from you!

Jess Stiles
Managing Editor

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Want to be a part of the next issue? Reach out to us at **collab@rootlessliving.com**

Contributor Spotlight

CHRISTINA STAWAIZ

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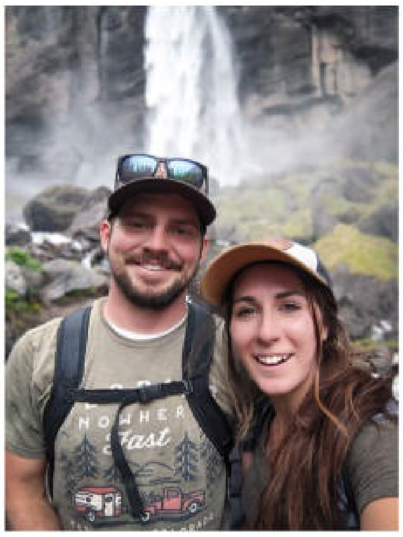
Spring Snacks

Christina Stawiasz is the creator of Thyme + Timber. She currently travels with her husband Bramdon in their 21-foot Coachmen Expedition. Thriving in nature, creating fun recipes and catching all the local markets along the way to create meals for **thymeandtimberlife.com**.



NICOLL DAVIS

@livingtinywithawolf

Alternative Artists

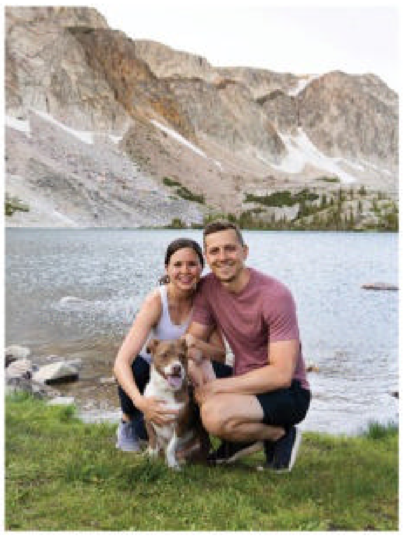
Nicoll and her husband, Jake have been living and traveling full time in an RV with their two dogs and wolf hybrid since 2019. You can follow her pack and their latest escapades or **livingtinywithawolf.com**.

HEATHER BARNES

@excellabella

From Dream to Reality

Heather travels and podcasts with her husband, Hunter, sharing their love of RVing and the lord. Their podcast leads listeners through daily bible readings, helping you experience the lord no matter where you are! Find more about at dailyradiobible.com or on Instagram **@thedailyradiobible**.



KATHRYN FRAZER

@adventuresofaplusk

5 Underrated National Parks

Adam, Kathryn, and Kona are an adventurous married couple and their pup living on the road in their self-converted sprinter van! Find them driving all over scoping out the best coffee shops, eating tacos and ice cream, and enjoying nature. For their detailed travel guides, check out adventuresofaplusk.com and their YouTube channel, **Adventures of A+K**.

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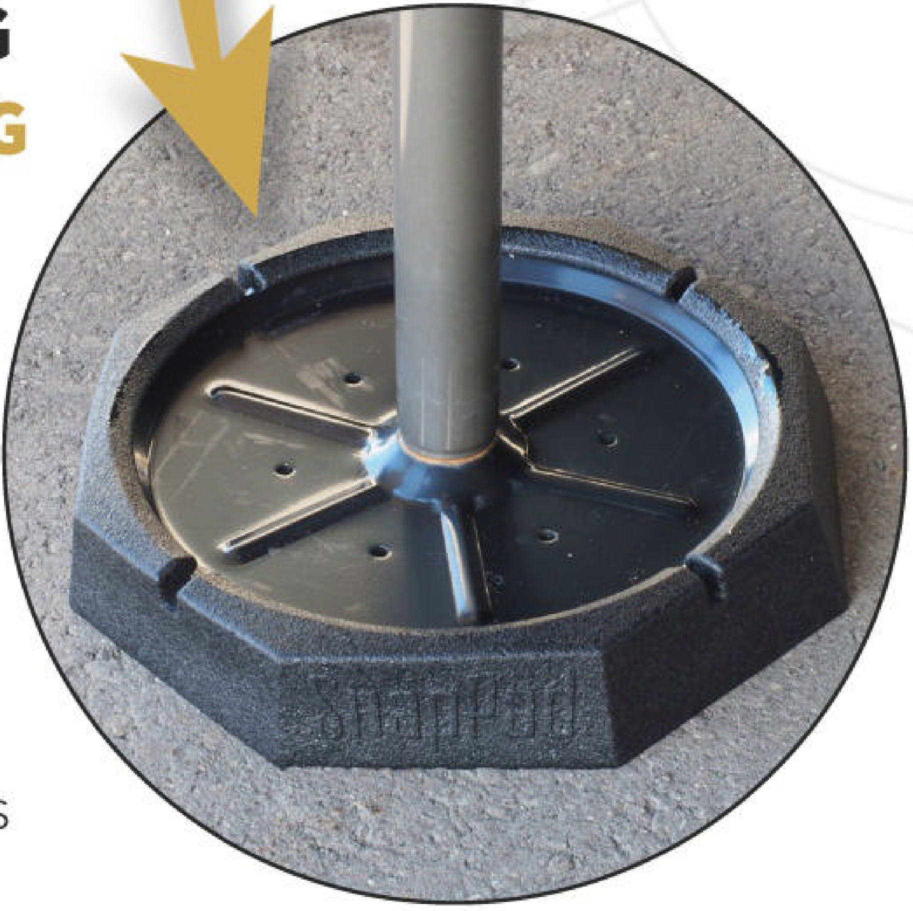
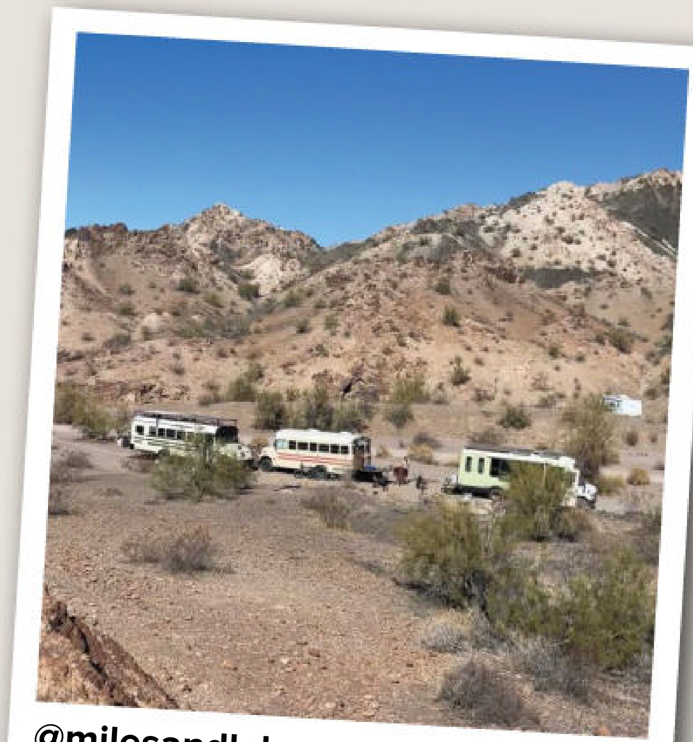


THE FEED #RootlessLiving

@thatoneadventurecouple

"She might not remember van travels, but it has shaped her in many ways that we get to witness every day."

“Every challenge is another opportunity to see that we make a great team and our nomad community is always there to lend a helping hand.”



@milesandlala

@maptheunknown

"It felt like a dream. "Mexico is definitely vanlife goals!"

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virtual JOB

@fefifofumpersonalcfo

“My first published article!
I love full-time RV living.”

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FEATURED NOMAD

meet Sinclaire (Lala) Germade & Miles Hostetler!

THEY'VE BEEN NOMADIC for a year and a half after converting their 2002 Ford E450 Shuttle Bus into a home. The two were looking for a challenge and a break from their monotonous 9 to 5 lives in their home state of Florida, and living full time on the road was the answer. "We're both nature lovers," Sinclaire said. "We enjoy being outside and knew one day we wanted to own land and homestead, so we decided—why not explore the many natural beauties in the U.S., and along the way discover where we would want to buy land one day?"

After envisioning nonstop nature and solitude, they were surprised to find their favorite part of this new lifestyle was connecting with others and making lifelong friendships. "The nomadic community is incredibly special," said Sinclaire. "It's honestly hard to put into words, but we've found our tribe in it, and the new people we meet on this journey have proved to be as impactful on us as the beautiful places we get to call home."

This journey is also about to get even more meaningful for Sinclaire and Miles, because they've purchased a second RV, a 2003 Flat Nose Thomas skoolie. Diving into another DIY bus conversion makes them feel alive—both say it builds trips that are driveable, feasible, and fun. Their new school bus means they get to expand their living space, which they feel is important as they grow long-term on the road. "No matter where you are in life, it's never too late to change course. You're the author of your life story—make it a book you'd want to read!"

Formerly known as @irie_vybus, they changed their name to @milesandlala so others could find and get to know them better. Follow their story on Instagram and YouTube! ■

@HIGHWAYHOOSIERS

"A SIMPLER LIFE"

Skoolie Reno Helps Couple Achieve Dreams

By Nowell Mallory and Lauren Baumet

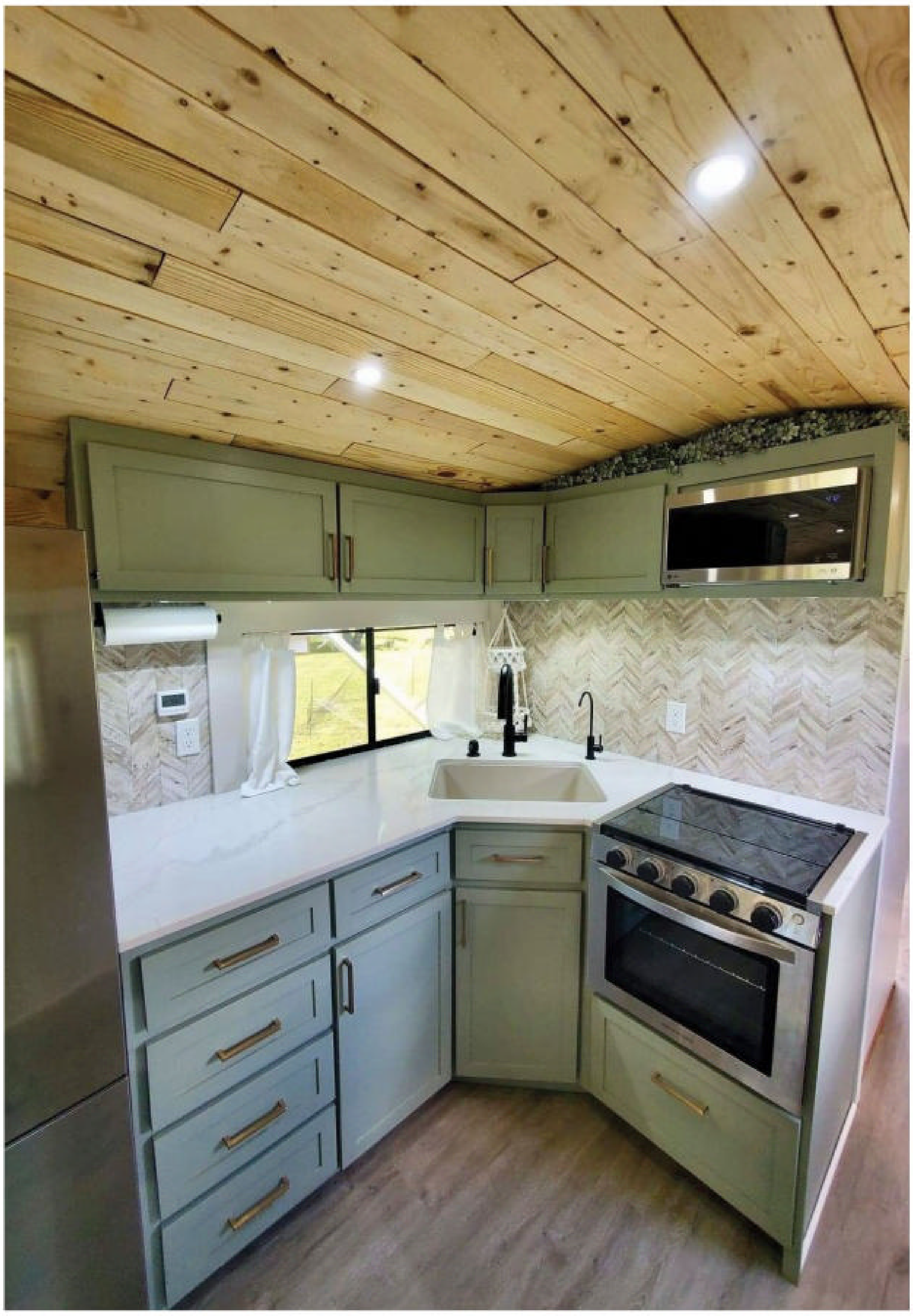
IT ALL STARTED with a dream to be able to drop everything and travel the country to see all it has to offer. We craved adventure and spontaneity rather than a monotonous life with the same daily routine. We are both from Brownsburg, Indiana, and we were ready to see and experience more than cornfields and racetracks. We were also seeking a simpler life where we could collect experiences instead of things, and create memories that would last us a lifetime—memories we could share with our kids and grandkids one day. We realize that time is precious, and we did not want to wait until retirement age to be able to travel full time.

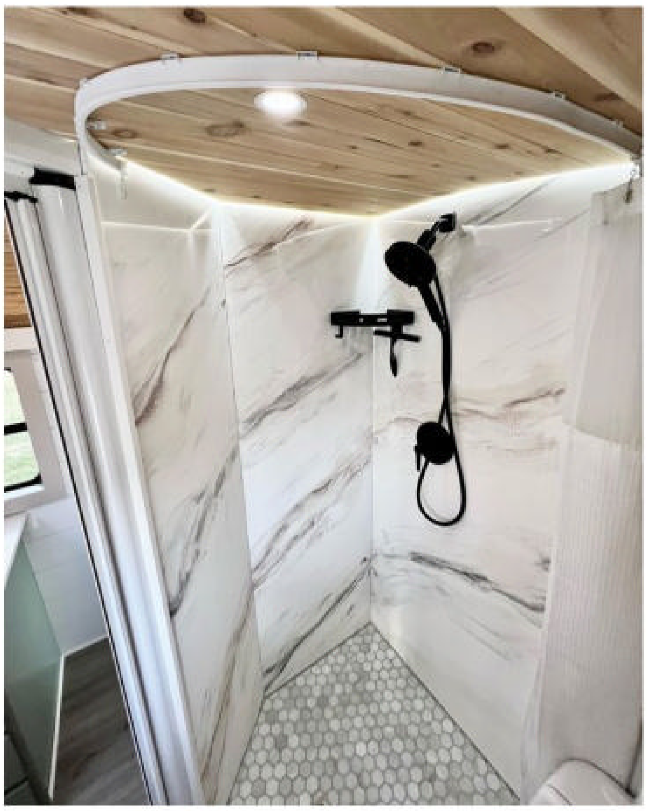
We began exploring our options, including fifth wheels, campers, and Sprinter vans, but we struggled to find something that met our criteria without breaking the bank. This is when we stumbled upon the world of skoolies—school buses converted into RVs—and we never looked back. Going this route allowed us to have an open canvas to customize our 230-square-foot living space however we desired. We were also able to customize the bus to achieve full off-grid capability, meaning we don't require any hookups and we aren't limited to staying at campgrounds or RV parks.

Knowing a skoolie checked all our boxes, we immediately started shopping, and we wound up in West Virginia purchasing a 2003 International school bus DT466 with an Allison 3060 transmission. We immediately began the conversion process, which took about a year and a half to complete.

There were days where it felt like we'd bit off more than we could chew, but we never gave up, and we persevered to achieve our goal—we were able to build our dream tiny home on wheels.

Our bus is fully solar-powered, with eight solar panels mounted on the roof for a total of 3,040 watts, and 7,200 watt hours of lithium batteries. It has 200 gallons

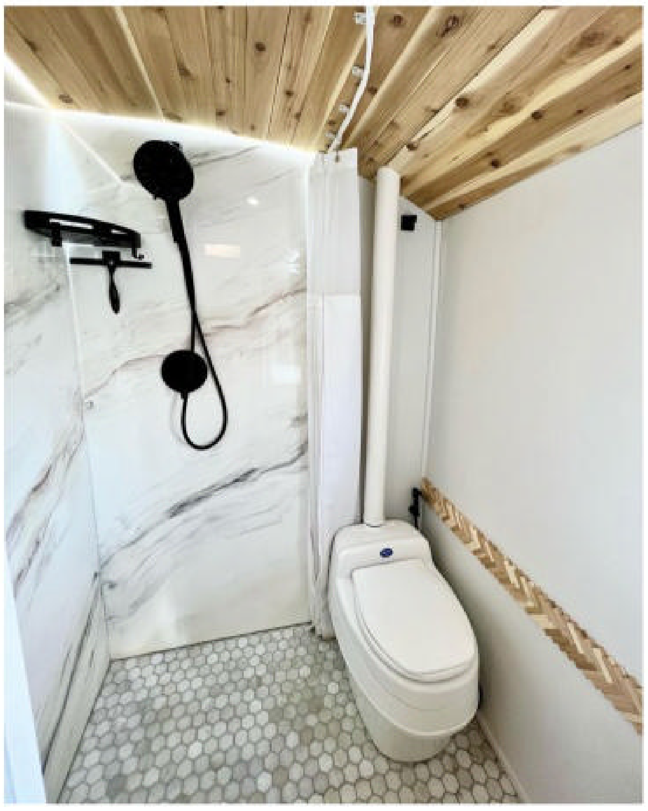




“We were also seeking a simpler life where we could collect experiences instead of things, and create memories that would last us a lifetime—memories we could share with our kids and grandkids one day.”

of fresh water storage, 100 gallons of gray water storage, and a 40-gallon propane tank. There’s heated luxury vinyl plank flooring throughout, as well as an automatic hydraulic leveling system, a rooftop deck, a skylight, and an electric awning. We have a water filtration system, a tankless water heater, and dual zone mini-split air conditioning. We even fit in some extras, like a washer/dryer combo, a bike rack, a collapsible indoor/outdoor dinette, and a custom fishing rod holder. The bus has a backup camera, diesel heater, residential tempered glass door, and underbody storage as well.

In the living room, we have a queen-size pull-out couch with custom memory foam upholstered cushions and a TV lift with a 42-inch TV. The kitchen has quartz countertops with a granite composite sink, a pantry, custom cabinetry, a propane oven, and a full-size refrigerator. We also have a king-size bed and a compost toilet.



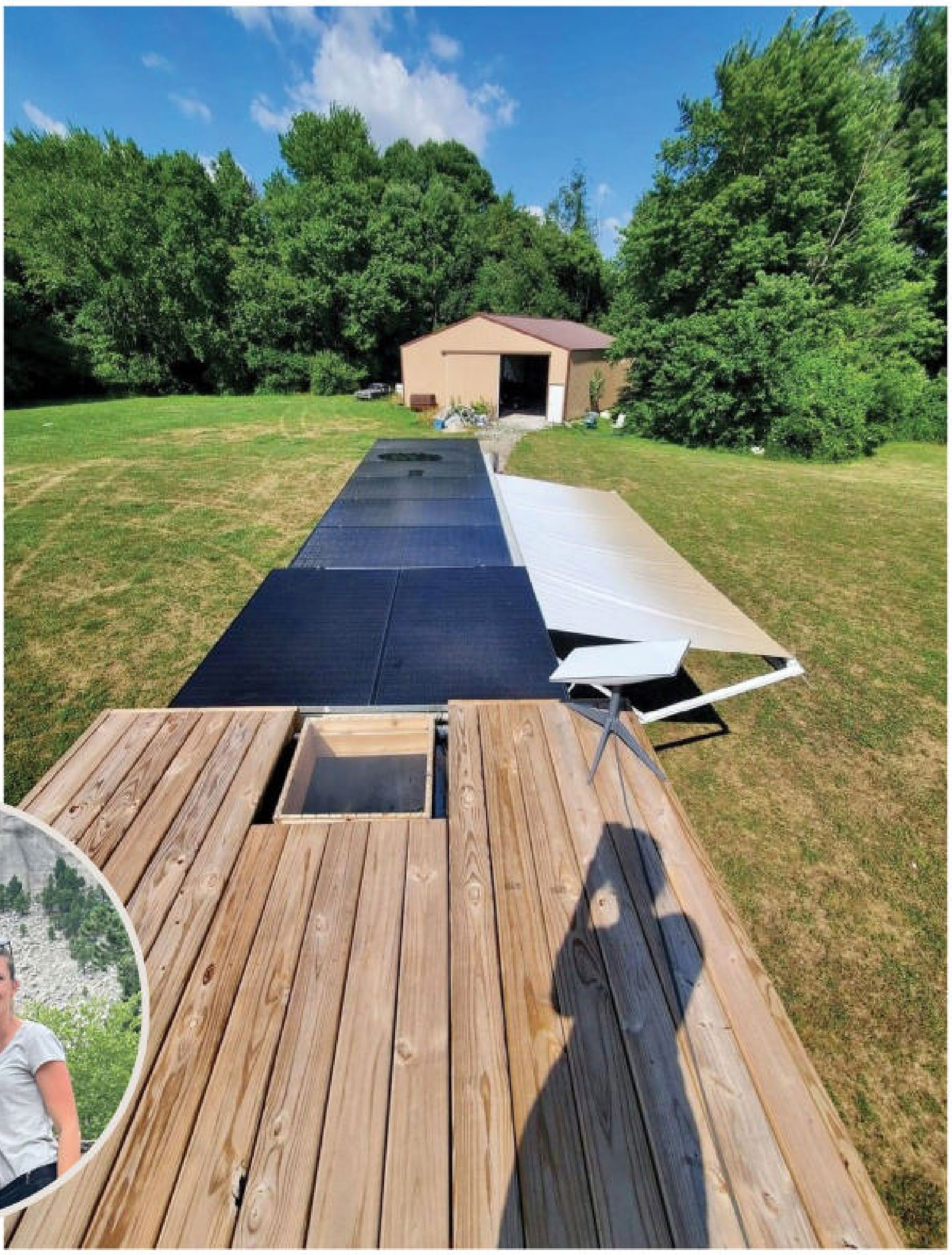
We tow a Jeep, two electric bikes, and an inflatable boat for alternative means of transportation while on the road.

We have now sold our house, quit our jobs, and are living in the bus full time with our two dogs. With the combination of the proceeds from selling our house and a frugal lifestyle of saving as much money as we could for the last seven years, we hope to be able to live off our savings for at least a year and enjoy traveling without having to work.

We spent about $50,000 on the conversion, and we are debt-free. Since we are completely solar-powered, we no longer have an electricity bill, and we are able to boondock at free dispersed campsites and on public land. Our biggest expenses while traveling are fuel costs, groceries, internet, and bus maintenance. We try to save money by making all our meals at home.

Living in a tiny space keeps us from accumulating materialistic things, which naturally means fewer impulse purchases. Our motto has always been that we will never look back and wish we hadn't traveled. We can always find a way to make money, but we can never find a way to get back our time. ■

For more from Nowell and Lauren, follow them on Instagram and TikTok **@highwayhoosiers**.



SPRING SNACKS

By Christina Stawaiz

@thyme.and.timber

GRILLED ONION RINGS

1	Package Frozen Onion Rings, thawed
	Cooking Spray
1 Tbsp.	of your favorite dry rub

Preheat the grill for low to medium-low heat.

Generously spray both sides of the thawed onion rings with cooking spray and sprinkle with dry rub.

Cook on each side for 7-8 minutes until golden and crispy.

Enjoy with your favorite dipping sauce!

GRILLED BLOOMIN' ONION

1	large onion
1	egg
½ tsp	Worcestershire sauce
¼ cup	cornmeal
¼ cup	breadcrumbs
1 ½ tsp	dried oregano
1 tsp	garlic powder
¼ tsp	salt
¼ tsp	pepper
	Cooking spray or olive oil

Preheat the grill to low.

Cut ½ to 1 inch off the top of the onion and peel.

Place the cut side down and cut straight down, all the way through and repeat every half inch around the onion. Be sure to avoid cutting through the root.

Flip over and gently separate the petals.

In a small bowl, whisk together the egg and Worcestershire sauce.

In a second bowl, combine the cornmeal, breadcrumbs, and dry seasonings and stir well.

Using a basting brush, thoroughly coat the petals with the egg mixture, be sure to baste the front, back and in-between each petal. Sprinkle with the breadcrumb mixture. I prefer to do this one section at a time, so the breadcrumbs adhere well as I work my way around the onion.

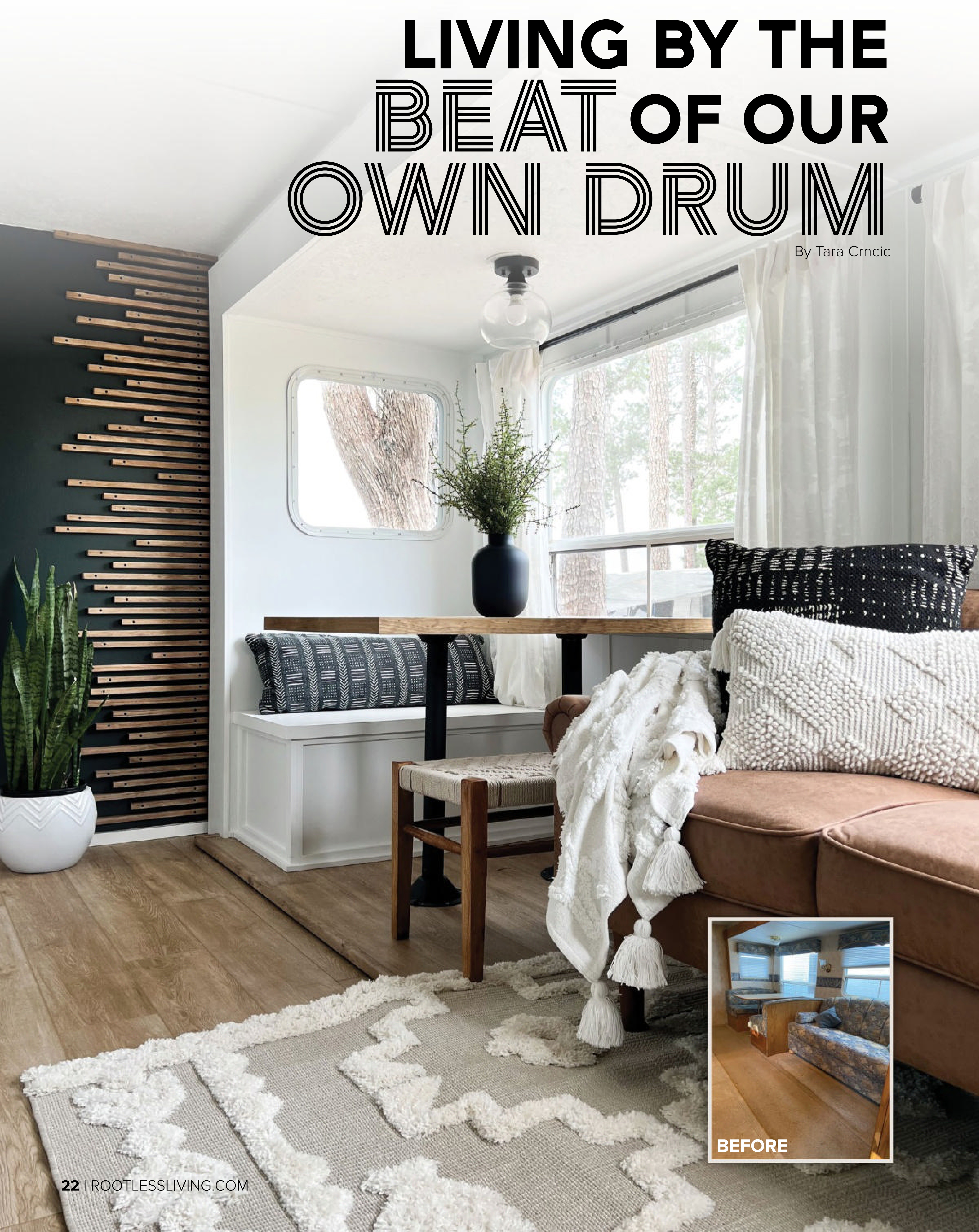
Spray with cooking spray or drizzle with olive oil.

Grill for 20-25 minutes or until the onion is golden and tender.

Serve with your favorite dipping sauce.

LIVING BY THE BEAT OF OUR OWN DRUM

By Tara Crncic



SINCE WE MET, we've walked our own path, straying away from the norms of society. We didn't finish college or work typical 9 to 5 jobs. Our beliefs aligned beautifully, and it led us on a boundless journey of possibility.

We are Michael and Tara, and after three kids and six years of a relentless home renovation, we needed a break. Our kids were at an age where memories were going to be ingrained, and experience and adventure were more important to us than the repetitive cycle of another home project.

On Christmas Eve of 2020, our old neighbors and best friends showed up in our driveway wearing Santa hats and traveling in a short bus. We learned their plans that day, and it was precisely what pushed us into the camper life.

After a week or two of eagerly checking Facebook Marketplace and Craigslist, we found a 2005 Keystone Springdale 298BH. As we walked through with the seller, we were completely naive to the red flags—we only knew that we would gut it as soon as it hit our driveway, and that nothing could stop our ambition to create unforgettable memories with our babies. Michael has a lifetime of construction experience, so our confidence was high. This wasn't exactly what we imagined our "break" from renovations would look like, but we knew the reward would be immeasurable.

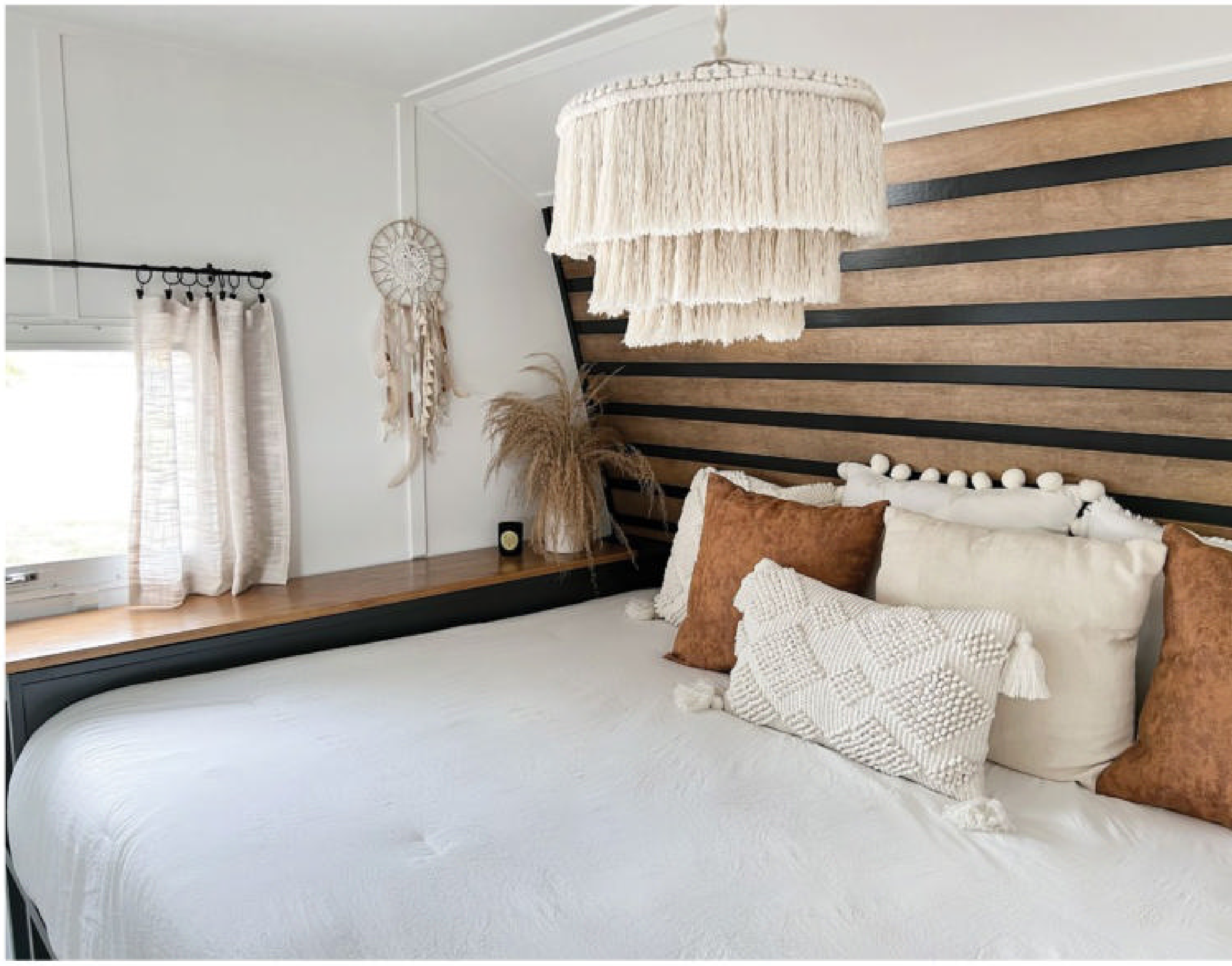
LIVING ROOM

In the main living area, I wanted to incorporate that same boho style with black paint and wood accents. We had an entire blank wall next to our slide that would be a main focal point. I painted the wall black while Michael ripped 1x2 clear pine pieces in half, cut them to different lengths, stained them, and used two drywall screws on each piece to hang them. We eventually will add two or three shelves between the slats, but for now we are really enjoying the simplicity of the design.

BATHROOM

The bathroom was the final part of our renovation, and is my favorite room in the camper by far. We repainted the cabinet and rebuilt the countertop using maple plywood. This time, I went right for appliance epoxy paint. I was clueless as to what I wanted for the walls, so I put the project on the back burner, but I soon came across cheap wooden hexagon tiles. We had a black cabinet and a stark white countertop, so the room was in desperate need of natural tones to warm it up. Thirteen dollars and a few different stains later, we had our backsplash. The unique design and wood texture really brought this space together!

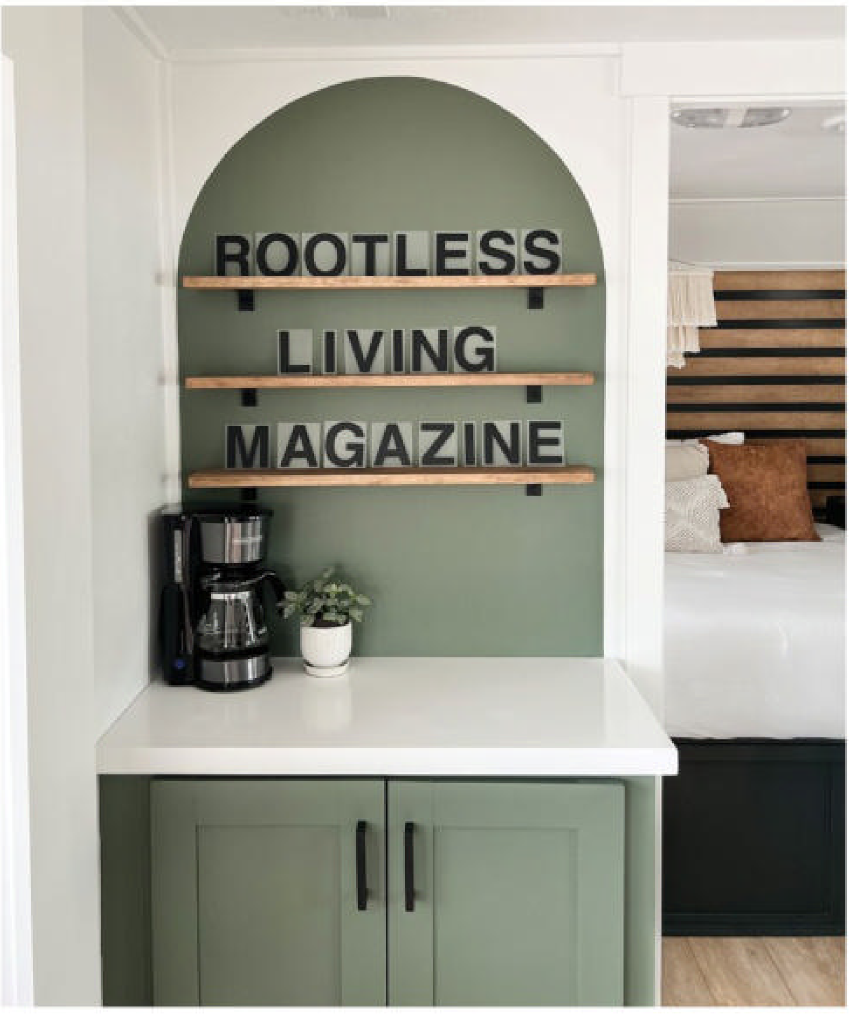
Renovating on such a small scale compared to a house has been extremely gratifying. It's been more than a year since we began this journey, and we've fallen in love with it. From the renovation to the design and, most importantly, the memories we've made, our vacation home-on-wheels fits us. Our roots are still embedded in our North Carolina hometown, but we feel the nomad life is slowly pulling us in.



KITCHEN

From there, we bounced around. Michael worked in the kitchen while I melted away the wallpaper border with a hair dryer and a scraper, daydreaming of the adventures to come. Going against the majority of suggestions, we put up real tile for our backsplash and used a flex grout, and it still hasn't cracked in more than a year of travels! We kept the cabinet base, but rebuilt the doors and countertop. After several stains failed, I ended up painting the counter with appliance epoxy paint. It was meant to be! The white high gloss countertop really brightened up the area. We took out the upper cabinets and added an open shelf. This is another controversial topic in the RV community, but we have no regrets! We traded our stove/oven for more counter space, and we cook over a fire, griddle, or with our Instant Pot.

> *This wasn't exactly what we imagined our "break" from renovations would look like, but we knew the reward would be immeasurable.*

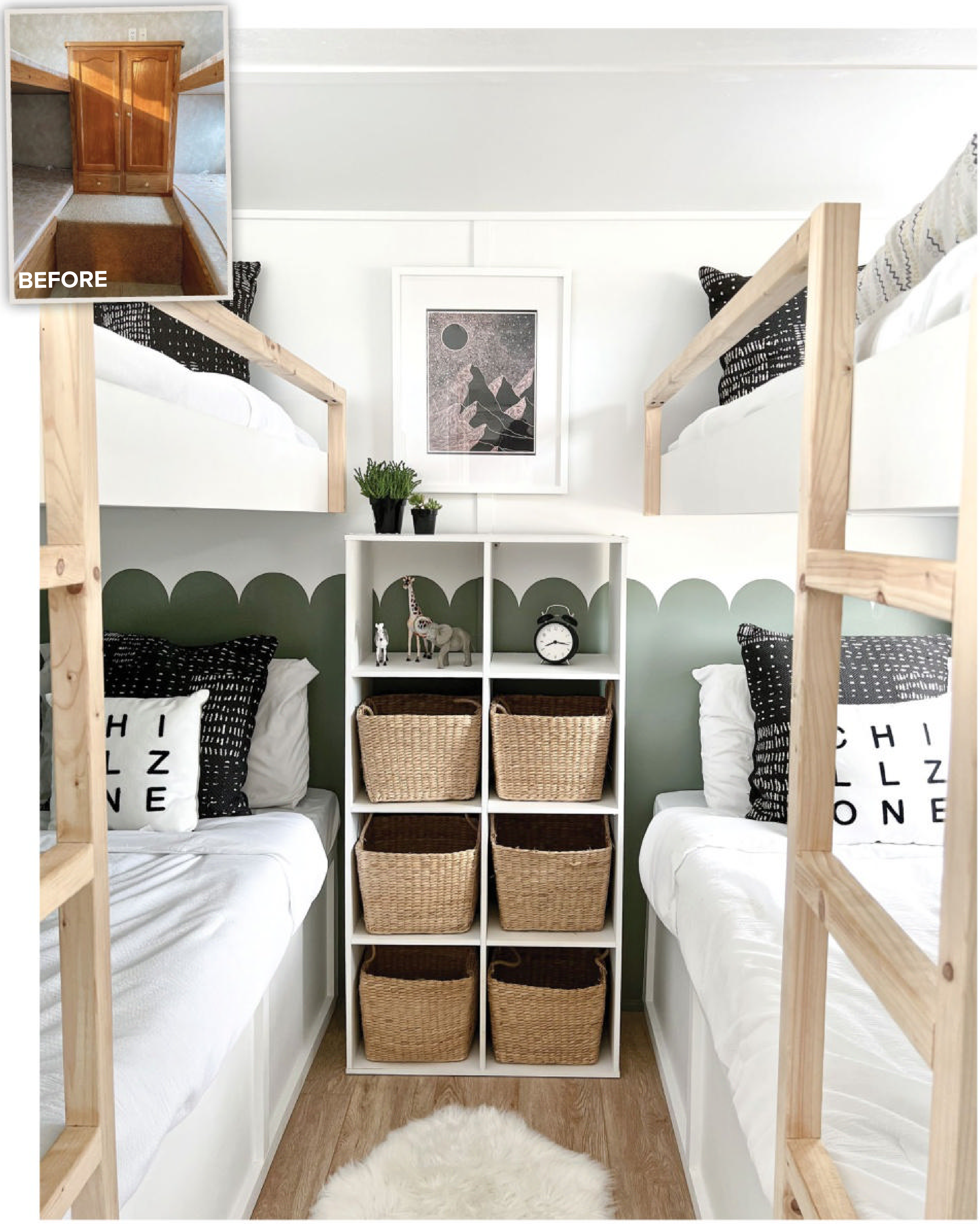


BEDROOM

As soon as the camper hit our driveway, we wasted no time. The sofa and dinette were the first to go, followed by the carpet and linoleum. After that, we gutted the bedrooms. Our two boys—6 and 4 at the time—were rock stars when it came to demo! Pro tip: Tell two boys that they are allowed to be destructive and throw furniture and debris out of a five-foot-high door, and your work is cut in half.

It wasn't until we had an empty shell of a camper that our confidence took a bit of a blow. The musty smell, the sagging ceiling in every corner—that's when the lightbulb went off. We had been ignoring the fact that this was an old, used, smelly camper, and our inexperience and impulses were coming back to bite us. There is nothing worse in the RV world than finding any inclination of water damage, and we had hit the jackpot. Every time we thought there was an end to the dreaded rot, we found more! Little by little, we peeled away the walls, ceiling, and even the rear exterior panels, until we eventually hit a dry area, and Michael began cutting out and replacing every inch of rot. Our camper looked like it had been through a natural disaster. But as hopeless as it seemed, Michael repaired it all and pieced it back together, and we were back on track.

Now comes the fun part! We are admittedly a pretty unorganized and unprepared duo. We don't draw or write up plans, we just "do." With my eye for design and Michael's expertise, we got to work. Starting in the master bedroom, we quickly agreed to turn the bed sideways to open up the space. Built-ins on



each side of the bed were essential since we took out the closets and storage cabinets. I've been heavily captivated by the boho/moody vibe for some time and knew I wanted to portray that in our camper, so we started with black paint, wood accents, and macrame. This room would set the tone for the rest of our space.

KID BEDROOM

The bunkroom had to be completely rebuilt due to the extensive water damage. The layout stayed the same, except for the outdoor access storage that ran through the bottom rear portion of the room. We decided to block off that part of the storage and instead take advantage of extra floor space. New ladders were built and a cute scalloped wall was added, matching the color of the kitchen cabinets. ■

Follow Tara and her renovation plans on Instagram **@ourtribeof5ive**.

HAPPILY Homeschooling

Resources, Tips, and Curriculum Ideas

By Blair Fitts

BRACE YOURSELF. THIS phrase, containing five simple words, might frighten you enough to abort a road trip real quick: traveling full time with kids. Visions of potty breaks, snacks flying through the air, and crumbs sprinkled like pixie dust in the backseat might be playing in your head right now. I can't help with any of those inevitable parts of traveling with hungry gremlins—I mean beautiful creations—but I can offer educational advice, from curriculum ideas and learning apps to keeping the children engaged and roadschooling guidance. My family has survived life on the road for a year with two rambunctious, eager-to-learn kiddos, and I'm happy to share what I've learned with you.

Let's start with the most difficult topic—curriculum. When it comes to curriculum, there are plenty of routes to take, but only you can decide which is the best option for your children and your family. The last thing you want is to be struggling to get your child to complete their math lesson when the beautiful canyons of Utah are beckoning. Not every kid is going to be skipping for joy over math, but using the best-fit curriculum will ease the pain for everyone. Curriculums with fewer books can be helpful since storage is hard to come by in an RV. Short lessons might spark your child's interest when everyone is dying to explore the new campground.

My 11-year-old daughter uses an online program called *Teaching Textbooks*, which has been life-changing for her. This program keeps track of math lessons, grades, and quizzes, and even offers tutoring help. The Teaching Textbooks app can be downloaded onto the student's tablet and taken anywhere, which is especially convenient for travel days. Math at the Grand Canyon, anyone?

Teaching Textbooks begins at third grade, so it wasn't available for my 7-year-old son. For him, I decided to use *Master Books*, a Christian-based curriculum, for math and language. Master Books uses a Charlotte Mason approach

and is convenient for our fast-paced nomadic lifestyle, with short, engaging lessons that are only 20 to 30 minutes long.

Before we broke down and bought the kids their own tablets, we felt a bit like Chris Farley in "Billy Madison"—"No yelling on the bus!" The tablets allowed us to introduce educational apps and books that effectively rescued our sanity. *Prodigy*, a free math app, challenges your child's skills in a level-up battle format. We also use reading apps, including *Hoopla* and *Epic*. *Hoopla*, our public library app, allows us to check out five books a month, and there's no need to worry about late fees because the books return automatically. *The Epic* app provides 30,000 books at your child's fingertips. Epic also speaks to curious little minds with fun educational videos that spark their interests.

Avid readers like myself and my daughter benefit from having a Kindle in our camper to avoid the extra weight and space of real books. At the same time, there's something special about physically holding a book that you just can't capture holding a kindle. Free Little Libraries, where you can take a book and leave a book, are a great option available at many campgrounds.

Traveling life provides a lot of uninterrupted family time together, and educational activities that can be done as a unit can be a good bonding experience. On moving days, MadLibs are an entertaining way to create silly stories using your little students' English skills. Writing prompts, like Spooky Halloween, are available online and are a creative way to write stories together around the holidays.

VENOMOUS
Snakes OF GEORGIA
SNAKES OF GEORGIA

We also play educational board games! Some that are popular in our camper include:

The Game of Life—kids can play banker, practicing math

Camp—teaches lots of fun facts about nature

National Parks Scrabble—a great thinking game to work on spelling while learning facts about the National Parks

Museum visits can also be incredibly beneficial—the kids learn a ton while being entertained with hands-on activities. I recommend trying out museums with personal audio devices. They were a huge hit for my two inquisitive learners at the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument in Nebraska.

Rains Refill the Glades

Roadschooling is a relatively new term for schooling on the road, and it looks different for each family. For ours, history lessons include visiting historical national memorials, such as Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. For geography, we study national parks throughout the country, such as Acadia on the East Coast, Arches in Utah, Mesa Verde in Colorado, and Yellowstone in Wyoming. Wherever it's available, we use the Junior Ranger program, which helps with history, geography, and science, and allows kids to earn a badge upon completion.

Traveling full time with adventurous kids doesn't have to be intimidating. With these educational options, you'll keep them engaged every mile of the way. Pouring into your little learners' passions and natural curiosity of their surroundings creates a lifetime of family memories and inspires a love for learning. The snacks might still soar through the air, and hearing the words, "I need to go to the bathroom" for the twelfth time might make your eye twitch, but rest assured, with all the resources out there, including our family's advice and suggestions, you'll have the roadschooling gig covered. ■

Blair Fitts and her husband, Tim, sold their home and decided to travel full time for a year with their two kids, Emma and Charlie, and their chocolate lab, Tuck. Homeschooling and weekend camping trips were already a part of their lives for two years before their roadschooling journey began, and they traveled to 42 states and 19 national parks all over the country. Find them on Facebook and YouTube at Fitts Family Travels, and **@fittsfamilytravels** on Instagram.

LIVING SUSTAINABLY WHILE RAISING Twins

By Tal Nimrodi

THE FIRST THING we did when we found out we were having twins was align our ideals and expectations. We knew right away that we wanted to minimize our consumption of baby products. Many of our friends who already had kids gave us their hand-me-down clothes, and we also found a lot of free clothes on Facebook groups.

Then, when the girls were only 8 months old, we sold our belongings and moved into a 20-foot van.

When it comes to babies, diapers and wet wipes are the most polluting items, so prior to giving birth, we researched extensively and decided on cloth diapering. We also heard about elimination communication, a method that uses cues and timing to help your baby eliminate over the toilet instead of in a diaper.

Moving into a van meant we only had space for the essentials. It also meant we wouldn't be able to continue cloth diapering, due to lack of space and accessibility to laundromats. We found an eco-friendly diaper brand that has 0% plastic in their diapers, and we stepped up our elimination ▶

communication game, buying a small potty and putting the girls on the toilet about four to five times a day, helping us use an average of about two diapers a day. To this day, we've never used wet wipes—instead, we bought a 1-liter pesticide sprayer from Home Depot that we fill with water and use as a homemade bidet for the girls.

As vegetarians, purchasing our food locally at farmer's markets has been something we really enjoy. Whatever city we're in, we try to find the local market where we can find the freshest produce. We cook mostly using an Instant Pot. We'll often make a stew before starting a long drive and let it cook while we're on the road.

While living in the van, we never once paid to camp. If we couldn't find boondocking spots, we looked for places in town where we were able to stealth camp, or Walmart parking lots. When the girls were younger, this was no problem, but once they started to walk we realized we needed more space and had to be a bit more particular about where we parked.

Recently, we decided we needed a bigger rig that would be tailored exactly to our needs and fit the lifestyle we want to live. After much research, we decided to buy a 30-foot school bus and set out to convert it ourselves while on the road. To be self-sustaining, we added solar panels to the roof and a few portable batteries. We installed a 75-gallon freshwater tank, a gravity-fed gray water system, and a compost toilet. Instead of adding a hot water heater, the radiator heats the water as we drive, saving electricity. With toddlers, we have lots of laundry, so we put a small washing machine in our bus and hang our clothes to dry. We built out our cabinets and walls using old wooden furniture and bought wood from Facebook Marketplace.

The waste/trash system we created eliminates the need for plastic garbage bags! We use a small bin for compost that we burn when we make campfires. We have another big bucket for recyclable packaging. As for the diapers, we place them in a sealed container to lock in the odor until we find a place to throw them away.

Living in a self-sustained bus allows us to boondock practically anywhere. To minimize our stopping and driving, we try to plan a general route of where we are going and conserve our water and power so we can be in one place for at least 5 to 7 days.

Now, more than ever, it is easier to live sustainably on the road, even with kids! By living sustainably, we reduce our impact on the environment as much as possible. We are working toward a goal of carbon-neutral living and believe this is the best way for us to raise our children with the values we seek to instill in them. ■

Follow the adventures of Tal, Ori and the Twins on Instagram **@twins_on_wheels_**

PARKED IN Paradise

Stationary RV Living

By Lauren Lynass

WE HAVEN'T TAKEN our RV out on a trip in quite some time. Some would call that death for a trailer, some would say we aren't "doing it right," and some may even call us posers because we haven't traveled in a while. So how long is "a while" for us? Well, our travel trailer has been sitting in the same spot for more than a year.

"Why even live in an RV if you aren't going to travel? Doesn't that defeat the purpose?" We think it all depends on what your purpose is!

Our family of three (which includes our fur baby) has lived in our Airstream for more than two years. For three-fourths of that time, our trailer, also known as "the burrito," has been stationary on either a concrete slab or on the chunk of land we purchased.

Our purpose for living full time in a trailer is not to travel every weekend, and it never has been! Our current career situations do not allow for that. We don't have the flexibility to hop from campsite to campsite during the week, and that was never something we expected to do.

We live in a trailer because it's simple, and because we wanted a new challenge. As two of the most competitive people you'll ever meet, we wanted to find out the answer to the question, "Can we do this?" So far, it has been more fun and challenging than we could have ever imagined.

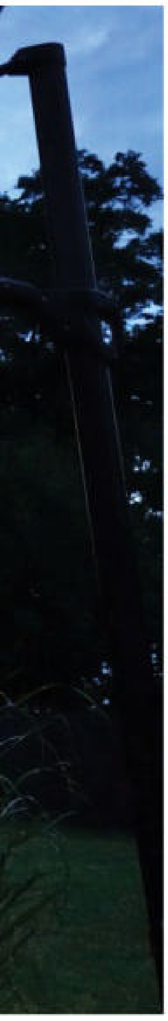
When military orders require us to move across the country, we easily hitch up and embark on a two-week trip, where we get to see places we likely wouldn't have otherwise. Most importantly, living full time in our burrito has given us the perspective to evaluate what is necessary for happiness and what is just stuff and extra noise.

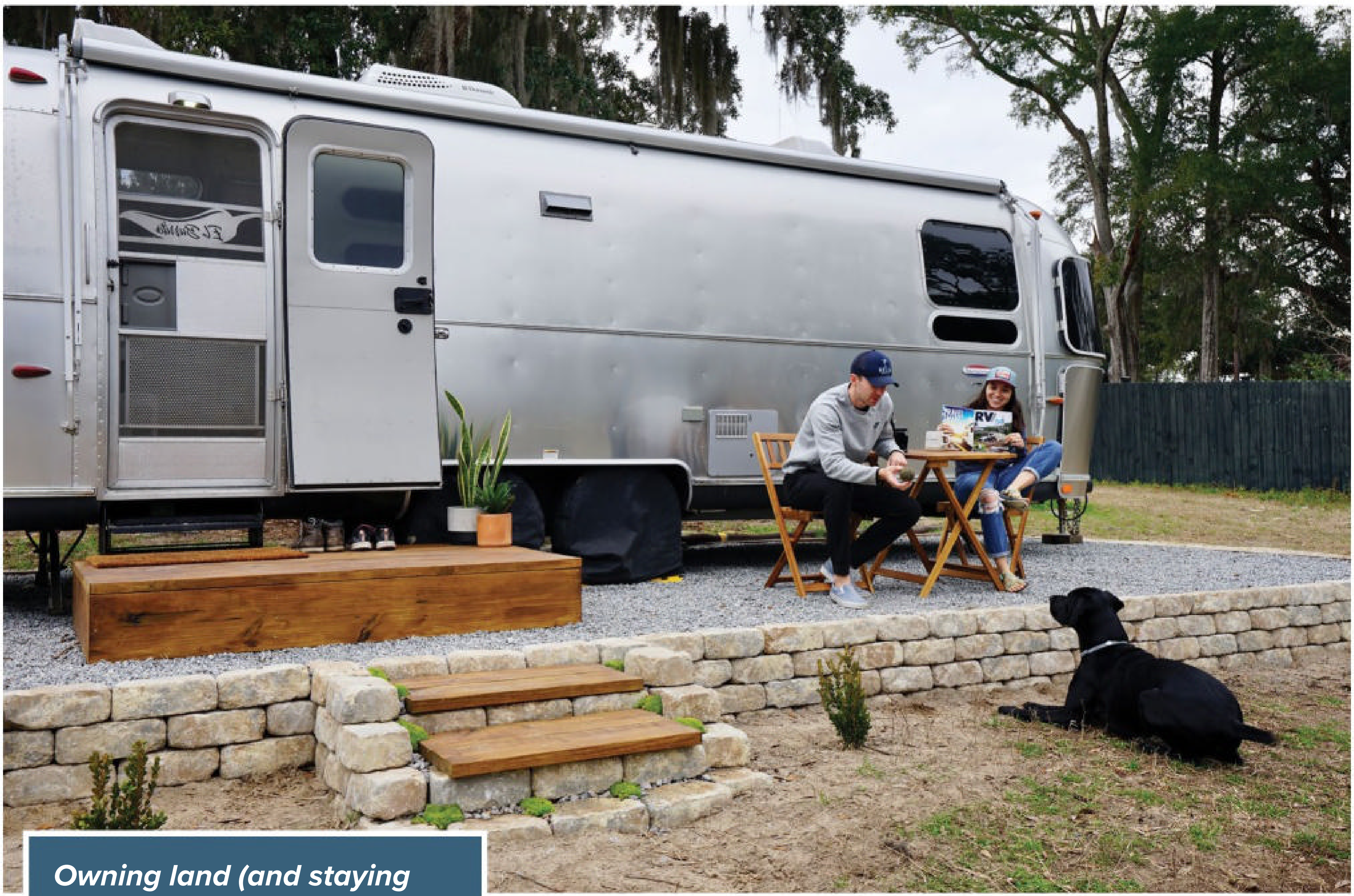
During long-term stays at RV parks in California and South Carolina, we were fortunate enough to find a half-acre piece of paradise, allowing us to park our trailer on this lot. Since moving onto it in October of 2021, we've been busy! We've done a lot, learned a lot, and grown a lot. Using a push mower to mow a half-acre lot in 90-degree heat with 87% humidity changes you—trust us.

If we were traveling constantly, we would have missed out on a lot of the things we've learned! Do you know how to build a landscaping wall? We certainly didn't, until we built an RV pad! One of our goals as a couple is to continue to learn new skills and challenge ourselves. Living in a trailer and being stationary has allowed for so much growth.

Living in a trailer has taught us:

- How to empty a black tank
- How to back a trailer into very small spots
- How to shower in less than two minutes
- How to better communicate—like, all the time
- Declutter first, then organize
- The importance of charged walkie talkies
- The power of organizing bins





Owning land (and staying put) has taught us:

- How to build a landscaping wall
- How to grow cucumbers
- How to transfer palmetto palms—it's harder than you would think
- How to make a DIY stock tank pool
- Weed the yard early and often
- Sit outside and enjoy the view at least once a week
- Septic tanks … we've learned a lot about septic tanks

We know the assumption is that when you live in an RV, you're always on the go, working remote jobs, and popping from campground to campground. What if we change that narrative and recognize that living in an RV doesn't have to mean traveling every weekend, and can look more like someone sitting out on their RV pad, enjoying the view and the elbow room, and brainstorming what DIY project is next?

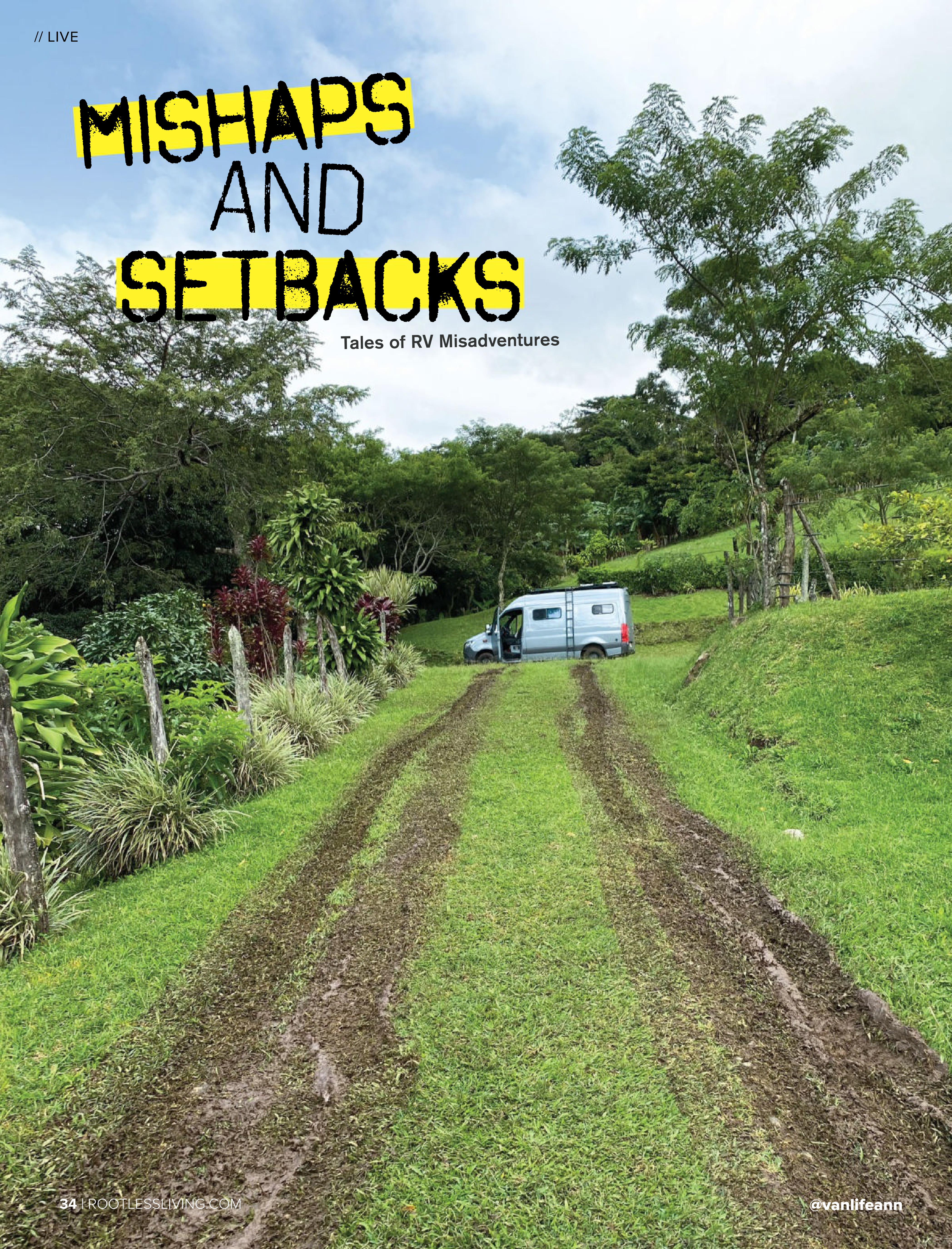
If you're thinking of "settling down" from the full-time travel life, that doesn't mean you have to give up RV living. It just means you have to find a new purpose for why you are choosing to live in an RV or travel trailer in a stationary way.

We have been thoroughly enjoying the "settled down" life and don't plan on stopping anytime soon. Here's to finding a new purpose! ■

Find Lauren, Sam, and Fenton the pup on Instagram **@alittlebitunhitched**.

MISHAPS AND SETBACKS

Tales of RV Misadventures



@vanlifeann

ANN BRAMPTON

@vanlifeann

Mishaps can be much more challenging when they happen after the sun has set. Ann Brampton shared that though she tries to avoid driving at night, she got caught in an unlucky accident in Costa Rica as the sun went down.

Driving with a friend in her vehicle, Anne said the two were focused on catching up instead of avoiding problems ahead. "I was utterly oblivious that Google Maps does not include a feature to avoid dirt roads—until we hit one."

Heading up a mountain in a dense forested area, Anne tried to remain hopeful. She described her 2020 Mercedes Benz Sprinter 415 CDI as a "brave girl," because it has handled similar roads before and has good tires and a superb engine, but it doesn't have four-wheel drive.

"We went up a dirt hill and slid back into a massive ditch leaning against a tree. Treds, rocks, a flashlight with no batteries—you name it, we tried it, only to eventually give up."

With no remaining options, the only thing to do was to wait for morning.

"It's never fun to sleep in an unlevel van, but try semi-vertical in a ditch!"

The good news is that once morning arrived, locals pulled up to help and the van was soon out of the ditch.

"One part I love about Costa Rica's rural areas is that everybody is so friendly. As we headed out, there were high-fives and cheering. We were up for an adventure, and that's precisely what we got!"

EVAN MARTIN

@the_martin_homestead

Evan and Becky Martin, along with their two kids and two dogs, were enjoying a two-plus-month full-time journey in their 2021 Montana High Country 335BH. When it came time to leave Maine, they knew the area required crossing a rough railroad track and making a sharp turn downhill.

"Knowing it was a tough crossing, I was driving very slowly—then I came to an abrupt stop. The front right jack had caught the railroad track."

Quickly, a plan was put into action—Evan backed up and placed a wooden block under a tire to lift the front of the RV so he could get over the track.

"We didn't realize the extent of the damage until we got down the road—the jack itself appeared fine, but the lower bracket was ripped almost completely off and the top bracket was twisted around."

Becky reached out to welding shops only to learn they couldn't help for six months. Luckily, Evan's uncle had a welder and was able to help.

"I spent about an hour cutting the brackets off and straightening them before welding them back on. It wasn't my best work, but it was structurally sound and has held up for the last year just fine."

CAMERON AND KATELYN GEGGATT

@our.greight.escape

“Our first trip in our camper was quite the experience!” Cameron and Katelyn Geggatt confess that their RV mishaps started on day one. They planned to visit a state park that was three hours away, but as newbie travelers, they left later than anticipated because they overpacked.

“As we were driving, we noticed our trailer’s bumper caps and drain spout were rolling down the road behind us! Luckily, they missed all the cars.”

But that was just the start to their setbacks—when they arrived at the park, there was no one at the front gate, so they tried to find their way as best as possible. Unfortunately, they accidentally turned onto a one-lane maintenance road that was a dead end. “We decided to make a U-turn, but it had rained earlier, and without a four-wheel-drive vehicle, we jackknifed in the middle of the road and got stuck in mud.” Even more unfortunate, the tension caused their sway bar to break off the camper!

“At this point, the sun was setting and we had hungry children, barking dogs, and quite a bit of frustration, so we decided to go to sleep even though we were still in the middle of the road.”

Now the fortunate part of their story—a stranger approached, and he started brainstorming ways to help the Geggatt family get unstuck. “He went to get his family, who had a truck, and they pulled us from the mud, towed our camper back to the road, and pointed us in the right direction!”

Thanks to one good samaritan, the Geggatts were finally able to settle down for the night. “We surprisingly had a great weekend that we definitely will never forget!”

KESTRA BRONNEKE

@boundlessbronnekes

James and Kestra Bronneke are also familiar with unusual RV mishaps. Three days into full-time RV life, the couple, their two kids, and their dog were passing through the Sierra Nevada mountains when a California black bear suddenly darted out onto the highway.

“With no road shoulder, towing 12,000 pounds, and several cars behind us, we had nowhere to go and even less time to react.”

Bracing for impact, Kestra and her husband oddly only felt a slight bump in their 40-foot 2017 Keystone Sprinter 347FWFLT, but when it was safe to make their way off the road, they pulled over.

Prepared to find evidence of a bear collision, they instead only found small damages to their fifth wheel.

“We no longer had an end cap, waste valve, or the last couple of feet of our black tank piping. We concluded the bear must have ‘shot the gap’ between our truck and fifth wheel—going underneath to miss all tires but not low enough to miss the hanging black tank piping.”

Luckily, the necessary repairs were soon made, which meant the family could adventure on and enjoy encounters with bears from a safe distance!

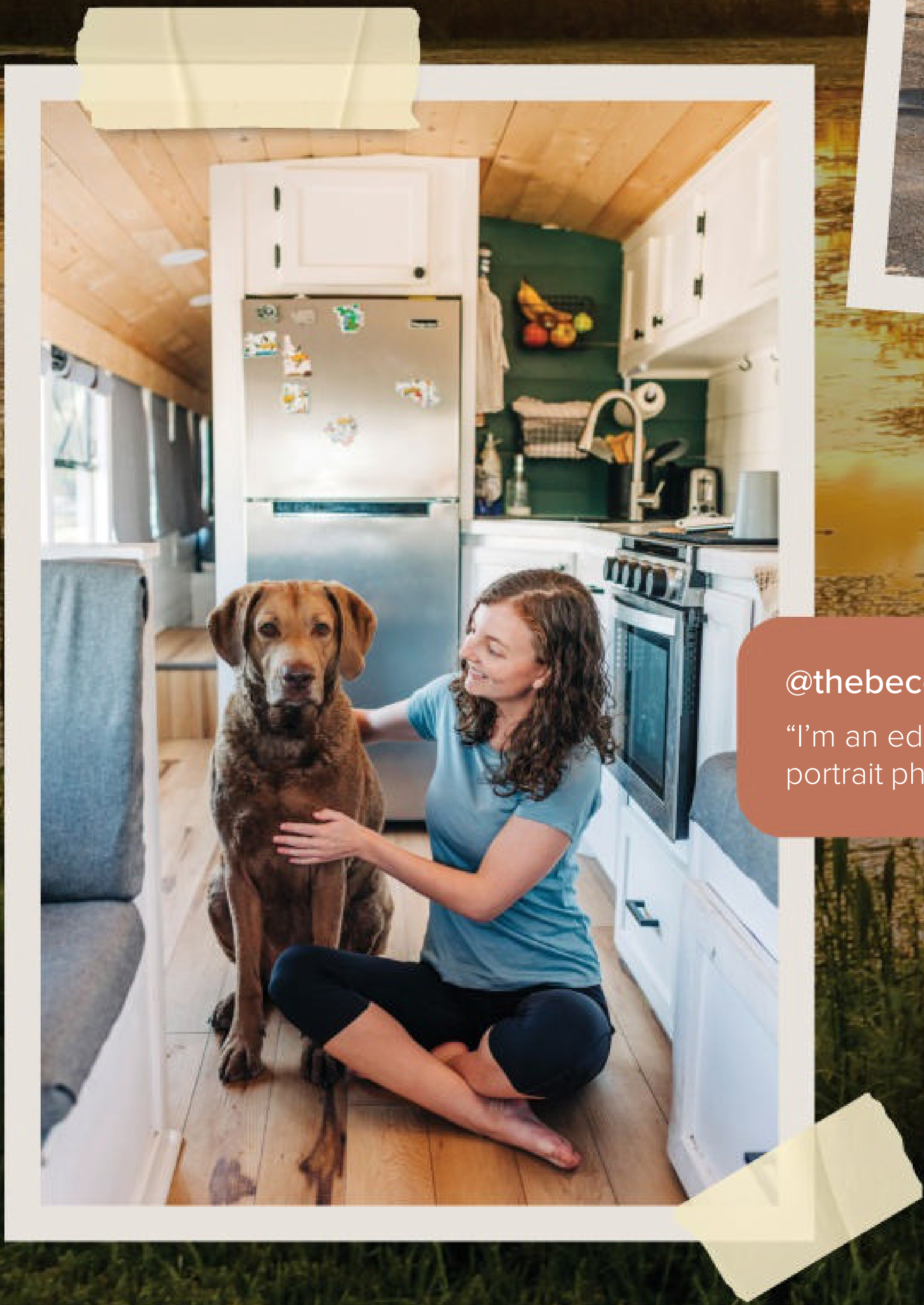
Do you have an RV mishap you’re brave enough to share? Email us your story at **collab@rootlessliving.com**.

HOW DO YOU MAKE MONEY ...ON THE ROAD

FINDING A WAY to fund travel is essential, which is why this is the number one most-asked question. The answer, however, is not so simple—from creative businesses to seasonal gigs to unique side hustles, our readers reveal how they make money on the road.

@wanderinwhilewecan

"I am in accounting! Dan runs his bookkeeping firm remotely."



@thebeccamathews

"I'm an editor for portrait photographers."

@yourtravelingdietitian

"We are a virtual dietitian and a web developer."

@wildrvlife

"Marketing director at a biotech company!"

@roamwithlisa

"Corporate learning, developing managers"

Here are other unique jobs from our readers:

National parks worker
Personal coaching business
Nurse
Podcast manager/producer/editor
Union ironworker

Share your job by emailing us at **collab@rootlessliving.com**.

istock.com/JaimieTuchman

Alternative Artists

How Nomads Create and Sell Art Remotely

By Nicoll Davis

A **NEW BREED OF** artists is on the rise, and they're not constrained by location. These nomadic creatives work from anywhere in the world, selling their art online, through galleries, and from their homes on wheels.

FABRICATED FROM SCRATCH: Jewelry from Upcycled Parts and Unique Dog Bandanas

Caleb and Crystal's nomadic journey started long before they hit the road in 2017—the call of the road has been in their blood for as long as they can remember. But the need to hit the road full time actually came from a rapidly-growing art business. Every weekend, the couple would pack up their SUV with their mini art gallery and drive eight hours or more to art shows around the Southeast United States, selling handmade jewelry creations. But they always had to be back before work Monday morning. After a few years of this hectic schedule, they realized they were spending more time on the road than at home, and that's when they decided to take the plunge and become full-time nomads.

Caleb and Crystal knew they didn't want to skimp on studio space, so they searched high and low for the perfect rig, eventually finding a 16-foot Coachmen travel trailer that met most of their needs. Although it was a little smaller than they originally wanted, it was the perfect size for their mobile studio, and they were ready to start their nomadic journey.

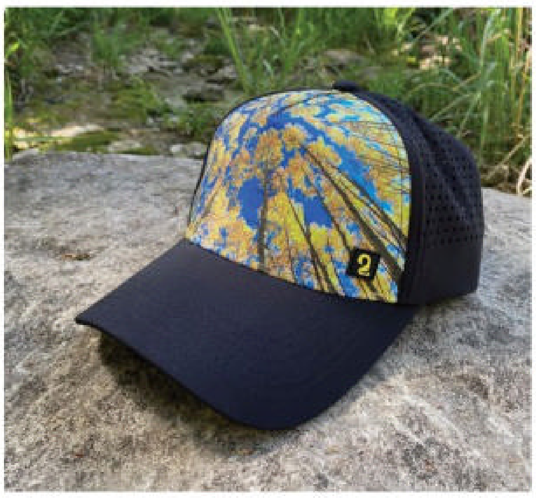
After three years, 60,000 miles, and countless states, it was time to retire their first rig. The couple decided to purchase a Grand Design Imagine XLS 18RBE, which they've called home for two years. They upgraded to this model because it is slightly larger, and has a perfect layout for their needs. They removed the original dinette and built out a work bench. The tweaks they made were all about creating a mobile studio and office so they could continue earning an income while living the nomadic lifestyle.

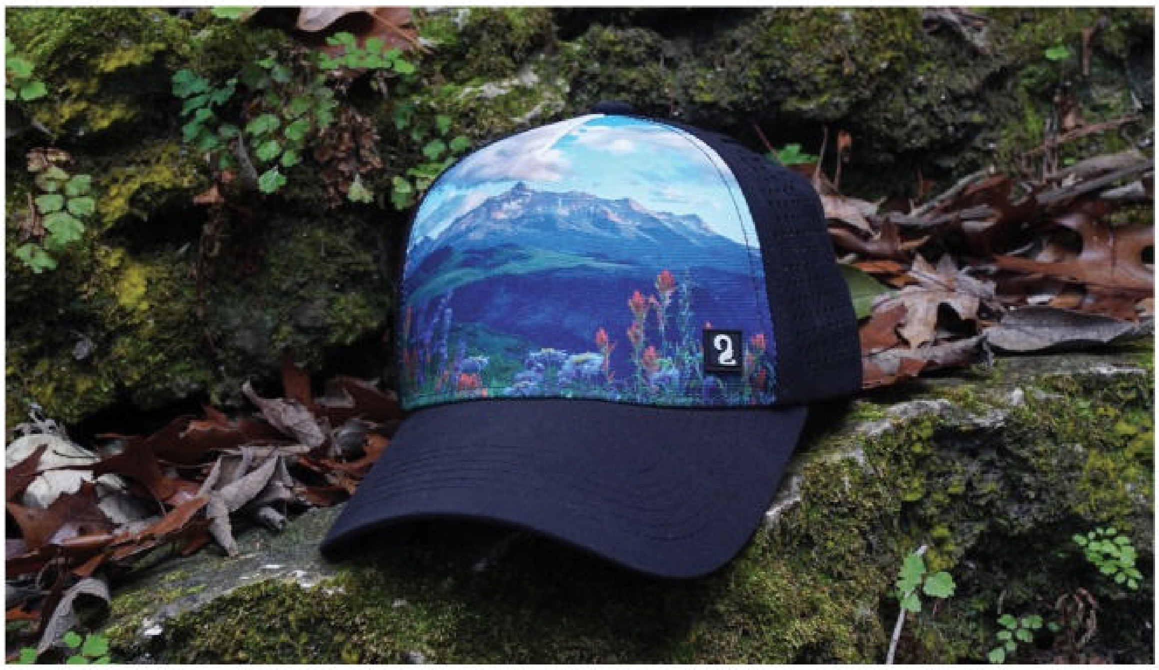
Caleb's jewelry is as unconventional as their lifestyle. He uses various metalsmithing techniques to create truly one-of-a-kind pieces, using upcycled parts and fabricating from scratch. Finding inspiration from blooming wildflowers on the side of the road and awe-inspiring landscapes they see along their travels, his jewelry designs come to life as intricate flower mandalas, crescent moons, mountain ranges, and more—hand-cut from metal and recycled brass bullet casings with secret messages hand-etched inside.

Caleb and Crystal were living on the road full time and traveling to art shows nationwide when the pandemic brought all of that to a screeching halt in 2020. This gave the couple the opportunity to find another creative passion—designing what they call "the swaggiest gear in the animal kingdom." As their social media accounts clearly indicate, they have a not-so-small obsession with the four-legged member of their pack. After creating some unique dog bandanas for their rescue pup, Crystal dove headfirst into starting another handmade business, The Ramblin' Wolf. This business is exclusively online, so the bandanas are made and shipped from wherever they are at the time.

After more than five years of living on the road, the nomadic couple shows no signs of slowing down. They love the freedom that comes with their unconventional lifestyle and they can't imagine going back to a traditional way of life. If you're ever walking around

SR
FOREDOM
HANDY FLUX





an RV park and hear the light tapping of a jeweler's hammer or the small thuds of a sewing machine, it may be coming from their RV.

Follow Caleb and Crystal on Instagram **@the_renegade_ramblers**, grab a piece of your own from Caleb at **calebbarnabydesigns.com** or **@caleb_barnaby_designs**, or help your pup stand out from the pack at **theramblinwolf.com** or **@the_ramblin_wolf**.

HANDMADE HATS FOR THE MODERN NOMAD; Treasure Maps for the Curious Traveler

For those with wanderlust, there's nothing quite like hitting the open road in search of new adventures. For Chance, Christina, and their two sons, that wanderlust has led them on a journey across North America in their 30-foot 2008 Chevy C5500 Shuttle Bus for the last two years. The bus, which they affectionately call "The Puddler," has served as their home and mobile studio, providing a unique perspective on the world around them.

Chance and Christina have been documenting their travels through videography and photography for years. Now, they're using their images to create a new kind of experience with their company, Puddles2Oceans. They print photos from their travels onto well-crafted trucker hats, giving people a way to connect with the places they've been.

With 10 years of professional experience in photography and videography, Chance is uniquely qualified for this project. He captures stunning images from his travels that inspire people to seek out new experiences for themselves. Each hat comes with the coordinates of where the photo was taken, so wearers curious about the destinations can search for the locations like a treasure map. "These places are not always easy to get to," Chance explained. "You have to earn it."

For every hat they sell, they donate 2% of the proceeds to a nonprofit within 200 miles of the image's coordinates, allowing them to give back to the communities they visit.

Christina and Chance have two young children, and they believe the nomadic lifestyle helps them appreciate the world around them in a different way. "Every day is a new experience, whether it be new terrain, new neighbors, crazy weather, or new towns," Chance said. "Being in beautiful places lends to art so easily, it is hard to not be inspired to create something." One of their biggest challenges is finding reliable internet or phone service in some

ON A DARK DESERT HIGHWAY
COOL WIND IN MY HAIR

MAY THE FOREST BE WITH YOU
NETFLIX & CHILL
SPREAD LOVE

of the remote places they visit, but they believe the experiences and lessons they expose their children to are worth any challenges they may face.

Puddle2Oceans is more than a brand; it's a movement to get people outside, enjoy the beautiful world we live in, and give back. You can find their hats at **puddles2oceans.com** or in a select number of stores in Colorado. Be sure to check out the couple and their travels **@puddles2oceans**.

MOUNTINSPIRE: Handcrafting Goods in a Home Everywhere They Roam

Katie and Stephen have found a way to combine their wanderlust with their love of art, and they're doing it in style. In November 2020, the couple took off in their refurbished 1990 Fleetwood Pace Arrow Class A Motorhome, equipped with their handcrafted designs, two dogs, and a ferret. For the last two years, their little house on wheels has allowed them to wander as they please, following their whims and inspirations, exploring different parts of the country, and designing unique collections to sell for their online business, MountInspire.

During their travels around the country, Katie and Stephen collect treasures and transform them into exquisitely-crafted jewelry pieces and home goods. And by customizing their home to perfectly suit their needs, they have created a mobile workshop that allows them to take their business anywhere they desire. Every inch of the motorhome has been carefully designed. From the bright and airy wall color to the eclectic mix of furnishings, they have created a comfortable and functional living space.

For Katie and Stephen, taking their business on the road was an easy decision. They find that being constantly exposed to new places has helped spark new ideas and fuel their creativity. The only challenge is finding the time and space to work on new projects—when they're constantly on the move, it can be difficult to set aside time to work. However, when they have the opportunity to stay in one place for a while, they make the most of it by setting up their workspace and getting down to business.

One of the biggest hurdles Kaite and Stephen face on the road is sourcing supplies for their creations. This can be a time-consuming and frustrating task, as they often have to track down specific items in a limited amount of time. But despite the difficulties, the couple finds that the process of sourcing supplies is an integral part of their creative journey. By seeking out new and unusual materials, they are able to push the boundaries of their art.

Thanks to their creative minds and entrepreneurial spirits, Katie and Stephen have built a successful online store from the ground up. They are constantly searching for new markets to break into and new businesses to wholesale to. This can be tough at times, but they enjoy the challenge and feel that it makes their work more exciting.

If you're ever in the market for a one-of-a-kind creation or unique gift, check out Katie and Stephen's inventory on Etsy at **mountinspire.etsy.com**. You can follow their journey on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook **@mountinspire**. ■

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From *DREAM* to Reality

Traveling, Living, and Podcasting on the Road

By Heather Barnes

HUNTER AND I were living on the East Coast in February of 2020. For seven years, my husband had been producing multiple daily podcasts while working a demanding and stressful full-time job as a pastor. We had often dreamed of focusing together on podcasting and traveling full time. It was with a mixture of hopefulness, fear, and anxiety that my husband resigned from his position and we decided to pursue what we had been mulling over in our minds for several years. We could never have foreseen that within three short weeks, the COVID pandemic would hit and sheltering in place would be our new reality.

A few years earlier, charmed by the endearing qualities of older renovated Airstreams, we had found and bought a 34-foot 1988 Excella 1000 Airstream before even having a tow vehicle. Bella, as we called her, came to us in all her original ’80s glory. We began some preliminary work in hopes of renovating at some point, but for the most part she sat in our driveway, daring us to travel with her.

As disorienting and uncertain as the beginning of the pandemic was, we suddenly had an unexpected window of time to get Bella ready for full-time traveling, living, and podcasting on the road. She became our COVID project. My husband and I combined our vision and our limited abilities with those of a skilled and willing friend, and we set out to renovate Bella to suit our needs.

> *“The purpose and hope of all of our podcasts has always been to inspire curiosity and wonder about who God is and what He is like, and to encounter His love for every one of us.”*

One early morning in May 2020, we officially pulled out of the driveway of our New Jersey rental filled with excitement and trepidation, and began our journey. We planned for our first extended stay to be on the North Oregon coast, where we could spend time with nearby family. We took our time heading west, and found that as long as we stayed in places with decent cell signal, we were in business. We would drive for a few hours, stop in the late afternoon, and podcast for the next day. Sometimes we stayed a few days, and sometimes only for a night.

My husband started the listener-supported Daily Radio Bible Podcast nine years ago as a 20-minute daily reading, taking listeners through the entire Bible in one year. Since then, we’ve added DRB Kids, which is a five-minute daily podcast; along with Journey, a 10-minute contemplative reading; and Daily Proverbs, a four-minute proverb-a-day reading.

Hunter does the lion’s share of the work, podcasting every day and managing the business. I podcast on Sunday and maintain connection with our listeners through our newsletter and social media accounts.

The purpose and hope of all of our podcasts has always been to inspire curiosity and wonder about who God is and what He is like, and to encounter His love for every one of us. We end every podcast with the reminder, “You are loved!”

During these last two years, the podcasts have provided a place for people to find encouragement, comfort, and connection during a stressful time; and our already-loyal listener base has grown both in numbers and engagement. As COVID restrictions

You ARE loved

gradually eased, we were able to meet up with listeners to share a meal or coffee, walk on the beach or campground, or even visit in living rooms.

We passed the two-year mark in June of 2022. We have crossed the country from coast to coast three times, staying in RV resorts, state parks, Harvest Hosts spots, driveways, and parking lots. Making time to be near family has helped us decide where to go and for how long. We are amazed daily by the beautiful locations at which we've stayed, the people we have met, and the privilege of working remotely and continuing to do what we love.

Life has always been a journey, no matter how or where we've lived, and we know there will be new twists and turns ahead. We mostly find ourselves grateful to be here, doing what we do and trying to make the most of the lives we've been given. ■

> *Life has always been a journey, no matter how or where we've lived, and we know there will be new twists and turns ahead.*

For more on Heather's travels and her and Hunter's podcasts, visit dailyradiobible.com. They can also be found on Instagram **@excellabella** and **@thedailyradiobible** or Facebook at **dailyradiobibletoday**.

FROM CROSSFIT TO CROSS-COUNTRY

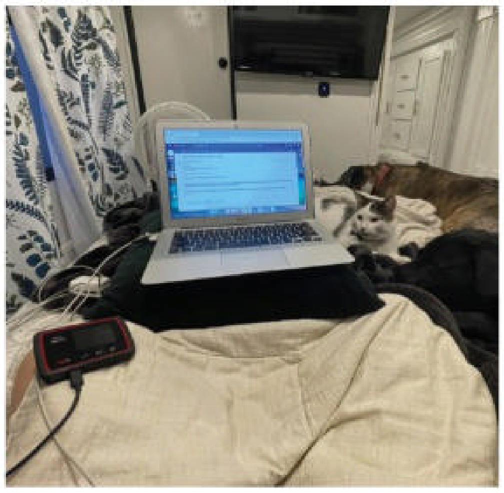
GYM OWNERS PIVOT TO VIRTUAL WORKOUTS

By Mallory San Nicolas

ONE OF THE top questions full-time RVers get asked is, "What do you do for a living to be able to afford this lifestyle?" I've found that most people assume either that we're swimming in money or that we are flat broke. While I can assure you it's usually neither, the answer differs for all of us. One fact remains, though—it's absolutely possible to generate a comparable income while traveling to the one you had while living in a sticks-and-bricks home.

Working on the road while traveling full time wasn't on either of our radars before COVID. For the 10 years prior to that, we owned a gym—CrossFit Barracks. We never could have imagined it not being a part of our daily life.

We ran all aspects of our business, and being there consistently was essential to our growth. That all changed when everyone was required to stay home and we had to quickly adapt to our new situation. Our loyal members continued to support us, so we wanted to be sure we were providing a comparable service.



This started with renting out our gym equipment and offering Zoom classes while we waited to reopen. Unfortunately, continued pandemic restrictions meant we were eventually forced to close at the end of 2020. Luckily, we built such an incredible community that our clients still showed an interest in our services! We knew

we wanted to work from the road at that point, so we started offering online programs. Fitness programming has always been something we've enjoyed, so with more than a few years of experience combined with a consistent demand, it was the perfect opportunity.

We've been able to combine our experience and knowledge with our traveling lifestyle by offering fitness programming you can do anytime, anywhere, and with limited equipment. Our 30-day programming includes five weekly warm-ups, followed by a strength aspect, and ending with a conditioning workout. We've been able to offer modifications not only dependent on the clients' equipment, but also on their fitness levels. We do our best to make the workouts fun and change them up so our clients never get bored.

In addition to our 30-day programs, we also offer custom programming where we design workouts specific to individual needs and goals. With this type of programming, there is more accountability and interaction. Since we love helping people improve their health, being able to see the results they're achieving is really rewarding.

Our programs are offered online and are available to anyone and everyone. So far, we've mainly been offering our services to past clients of CrossFit Barracks and using their referrals to grow, but we are finding ways to increase our online presence, and we have more in the works!

While our fitness programs help us generate income, this is just one of many projects we are continually working on. You may need multiple income streams to make this lifestyle work, but the key is to be creative, do what you love, and find a way to make it happen. We don't regret our circumstances regarding how we got here, because traveling with our family has been the biggest blessing. We know now that we will keep evolving and adapting financially to continue traveling full time and making memories with our family for years to come. ■

> **“ONE FACT REMAINS, THOUGH—IT'S ABSOLUTELY POSSIBLE TO GENERATE A COMPARABLE INCOME WHILE TRAVELING TO THE ONE YOU HAD WHILE LIVING IN A STICKS-AND-BRICKS HOME.”**

For more on Mallory's lifestyle and travels, follow her on Instagram **@lost0npurpose**.

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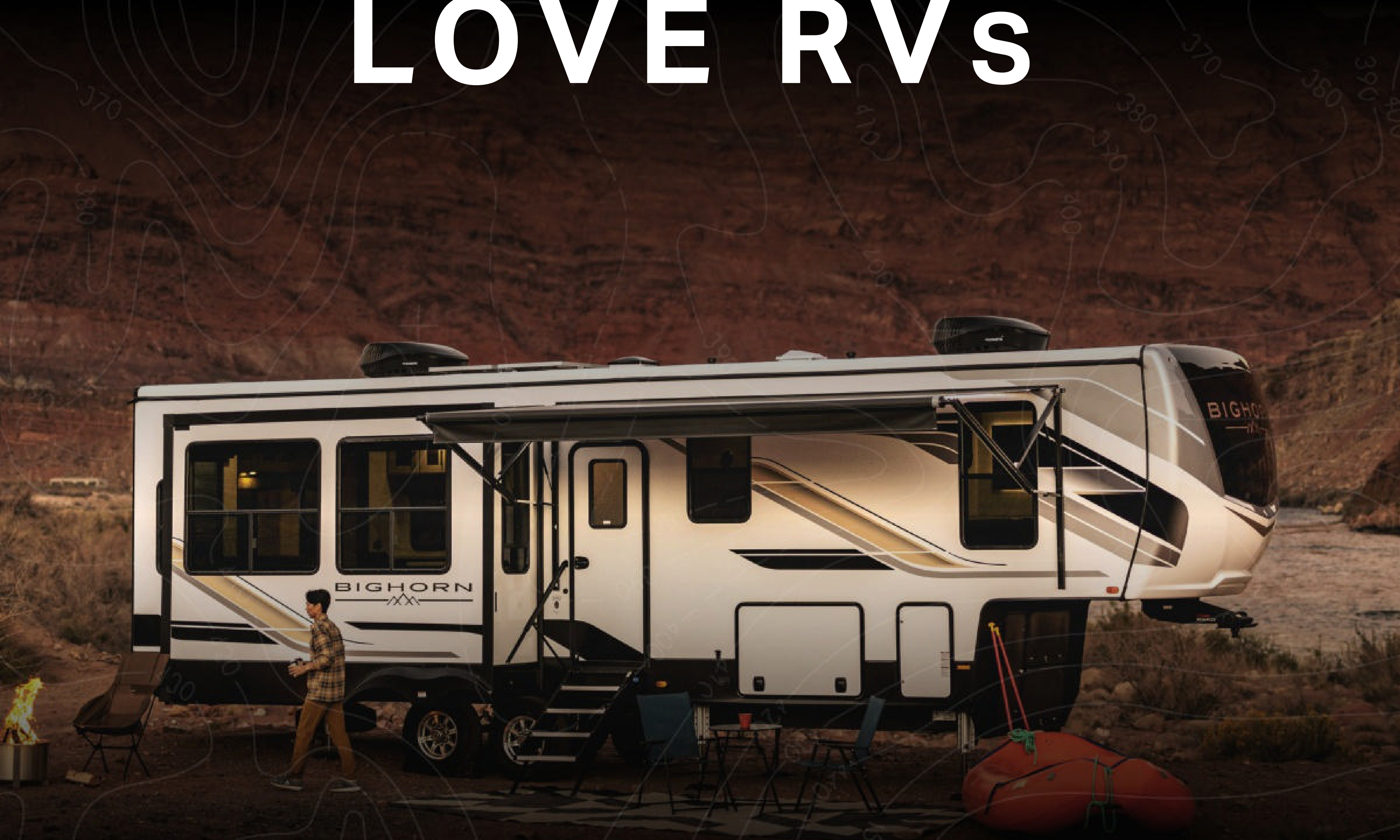

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A PERFECT TRAVEL DAY

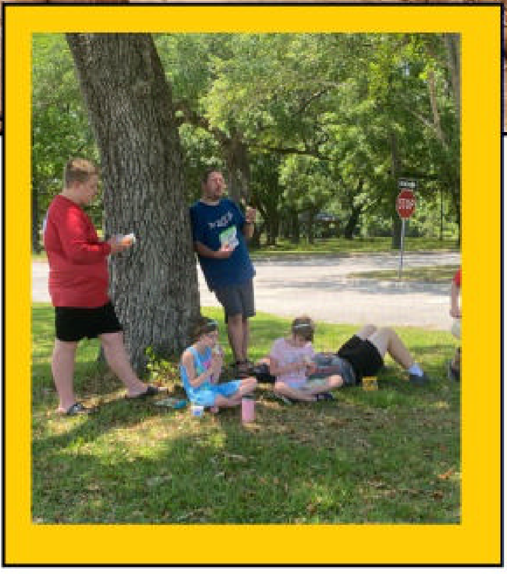
How A Family of Seven Handles Moving Camp

By Gretchen Watson

TODAY IS A travel day, so what does it look like for this family of seven? It's a process to get our home on wheels loaded up and ready to leave. If we are traveling in the summer, we make sure to get moving early to avoid hot roads, but in the cooler months, we have a more relaxed schedule.

Everyone has their own responsibility to get our home ready—some of us make beds, others clean or vacuum floors or wash dishes, and others secure everything that can fall or shift around while we're in motion. I make sure we have plenty of healthy snacks ready for the day. We've been doing this for three years, so by now everyone knows exactly what their responsibility is. I fill all our travel mugs with water and usually have an extra gallon off to the side for filling up during stops. We normally limit our moving days to three hours or 300 miles, but that's not always possible. When we have a longer day planned, I will pack a quick lunch for when we stop.

We lock up cabinets, close slides, and load up, making sure to pack toys, coloring books, play-doh, stickers, books, and a few electronics and movies for the trip. If it's an especially long trip, I'll give the younger kids activity bags.



I keep color-coded drawstring bags in the car, so everyone has their own. I fill these with little things like card games, lego sets, new dolls, things that stick to the window, and other activities to make long travel days easier to handle for energetic little kids. These things usually keep our kids pretty entertained and give them something to look forward to.

We drive two vehicles since we have such a large family, so the older boys ride in the tow vehicle with their dad and either listen to music on their headphones or watch YouTube. The younger kids ride with me and stay entertained playing together. Some travel days fall on school days, and since we homeschool, this gives us a great opportunity to get some writing or reading work done on the road. We also have an app that tells us about historic events that have happened in areas we pass through, which provides great conversation starters and plenty of entertainment.

Since we tow with gas-fueled vehicles, we usually make gas stops every 100 miles. These stops allow us an opportunity to get out, stretch our legs, use the restroom in our RV, and replenish any drinks or snacks. Stopping often has also been a great help in keeping anyone from getting car sick. When it's lunchtime, we will either pick a large gas station that accommodates RVs or a rest stop, then I get all the lunches out of the fridge and we find a picnic table. Our simple lunches usually consist of sandwiches, wraps, salads, or a homemade charcuterie board. We allow the kids plenty of time to run around and play in the grass to get all the wiggles out, since being stuck in the car for hours definitely means there is plenty of pent-up energy. On rare occasions, we may stop at a Cracker Barrel and enjoy a hot meal to give us all a break from traveling. There are even some locations along scenic highways where you can stop at pull-offs, which make for a beautiful backdrop for a quick lunch.

We've been on the road since 2019 with our kids, whose ages now range from 7 to 14, and we really feel we've perfected our traveling game. It wasn't always this smooth, but over time, we've figured out what keeps everyone entertained and happy from one location to the next. There is always someone who isn't in the mood for traveling that day, but usually one of these activities will help improve their mood and make happy travelers.

Finally, we pull into our destination and get ready to unload. Everyone is excited to have made it, so we quickly get to work doing our parts to get set up and enjoy our new location. Then we can hang out or begin exploring the area for a few days before we pack up and do it all over again. ■

Follow the Watson family's adventures on Instagram **@themindfulnomadic**.

ASCEND
COMMUNITY

ProjectTrek

Nate and Christian, the husband-and-wife duo Project Trek, are full-time RVers who love to experience the outdoors with their two kids, Ella and Andersen.

After suffering from the financial collapse of a failed business, Nate and Christian decided to take matters into their own hands and began the process of pursuing financial freedom. After completing their debt-free journey, they realized there was still something missing. They had a deep rooted desired to travel and spend more time with their children. Inspiration for full-time travel came from a week-long trip in a borrowed RV. Shortly after, the family dove head first into full-time RVing in April of 2017, when they hit the road in their Open Range Fifth Wheel by Highland Ridge RV. They have no plans of going back to the suburban life! Follow along with them as they navigate road schooling, healthy living and forming a community for other full-timing families.

@projecttrek

20 bucket list BOONDOCKING spots

Nothing beats a campsite that's as remote as it is beautiful. Many RVers are in search of the most epic boondocking campsites throughout the country, and we've compiled a list of 20 sites you can check out on your next off-grid adventure!

Photo contributed by Marie Casey
@awesome.journies

Alabama Hills, CA

36.58681, -118.11690

This place is a dream—unlimited dispersed camping and endless views!

Tucked between Death Valley and Mammoth Lakes, there are so many cool places to park for the night. At this spot, there is plenty of room for any size rig! We chose this area because I needed service for work, so if you're looking for a place with reception, this spot is for you!

We loved hiking Mount Whitney Portal to Lone Pine Lake, which is a 6.5-mile out-and-back trail with 1,876 feet in elevation gain. There were views the entire way up and a beautiful lake view as a reward at the end.

For epic shots, this spot on movie road is perfect. Fun fact: "Django Unchained," "Iron Man," and "Gladiator" are just a few of many movies filmed here! We highly recommend this location.

Contributor Logan Bricketto
@thescenicshuttle

Furnace Creek Washington Road

SHOSHONE, CA

35.9093, -116.3038

This BLM area is located off CA-127, between Shoshone and Tecopa, or approximately 65 miles southeast of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center in Death Valley National Park. Access in our 35-foot RV was easy and smooth. Along with this, the main gravel road was reasonable, with some washboarding.

There were only a handful of RVs in this beautiful area. Our specific spot was large enough for a group of at least five rigs our size. Our stay in December was super quiet—maybe two OHVs came through the whole time. Cell service was great on AT&T and Verizon.

In addition to Death Valley National Park, there are some interesting hiking trails and spots to explore in Shoshone and Tecopa, especially the China Ranch Date Farm for their date coffee shake. Come prepared, as there aren't many resources available here. All supplies and laundry, including cheaper gas, are 35 miles northeast in Pahrump, Nevada.

Contributor Marie Casey
@awesome.journies

Mexican Hat Rock

MEXICAN HAT, UT

37.1712, -109.8492

This BLM area is located off UT-163, less than three miles north of the town of Mexican Hat. Access with our 35-foot Class A towing a Honda CR-V was no problem. More RVs could be found at a large parking area closer to the highway, but we drove in and got a spot right in front of the infamous rock.

We went in late March and the area was fairly quiet for most of the eight days we stayed. Most of the traffic was from passing roadtrippers checking out the rock. Cell service was good on AT&T, but not on Verizon. It should also be noted that there was no cell service by the river.

There is a lot to do in the surrounding area, including Valley of the Gods, Goosenecks State Park, Monument Valley, exploring UT-261 and UT-95 (Trail of the Ancients), and Natural Bridges National Monument, to name a few. Gas and fresh water were available at the gas station in Mexican Hat. Groceries, laundry, and other amenities are available in Blanding, which is 45 miles northeast.

Contributor Marie Casey
@awesome.journies

Hickory Hammock Campground

LORIDA, FL

27.4478, -81.1771

If you want a taste of real Florida, head to the middle of the state. There's not much to do here except relax and enjoy the natural beauty, so set up a hammock between giant oaks and admire the golden sunlight filtered by Spanish moss and swaying palms.

If you want a break from relaxation, catch part of The Florida Trail from the campground. This 1,500-mile trail winds its way through the state.

Boondocking on Florida Water District land is free, but unique. You will need to make an advance reservation online. The campground is more similar to a paid dry campground than dispersed camping. You choose a designated campsite when you arrive, which includes a picnic table and fire ring. There is cell signal, as well as water, toilets, and even an outdoor shower.

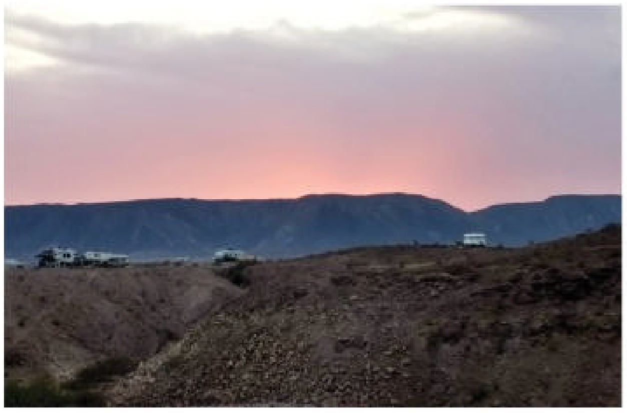
The campground is about a mile down a dirt road, but accessible to any size RV. Because it is an equestrian campground, there is a stable, corral, and horse trails, but you do not need horses to stay.

Contributor Rachael Lyons
@thetasteforadventure

Imperial Dam Long Term Visitor Area

WINTERHAVEN, CA

32.901256, -114.495431



A community of nomads, travelers, and snowbirds descends on this area every winter, as it is a true diamond in the rough. It's also known by other names, including Senator Wash or South Mesa.

This area is unique because while it is still considered boondocking, you can stay for up to seven months in the season for a permit fee that works out to be about 85 cents a day. The permit allows you use of the area, which includes dumpsters, black tank disposal, bathrooms with flush toilets, and potable water. Across the bridge, you'll find coin-operated showers.

In the South Mesa area, there is an outdoor pavilion where activities are held. The Christian Services Center operates a building in the area where winter residents can send and receive mail or store their trailers until they return next season. They even have a thrift store on site. Wild burros also have made the area their home.

Nearby is Yuma, Arizona, where you can stock up on supplies. To head out exploring, visit Castle Dome Ghost Town in the area.

Contributor Jamie May
@jypsythreads

Vedauwoo

BUFORD, WY

41.154694, -105.381778

Vedauwoo is tucked back on Forest Service Road 700 behind the campground. While there are paved sites for $10 a night, there are also 97 designated dispersed campsites. These sites can accommodate all types of RVs, including our 37-foot Class A Fleetwood Excursion. The dispersed campsites are marked and each site has a rock fire ring. All vehicles and campfires must be within 50 feet of the site marker at all times. The length of stay is limited to 16 days. There is a spot to dump and get fresh water in Laramie at the Wyoming Territorial Prison State Historic Site on Snowy Range Road.

Our site, #12U, about two miles in on a maintained forest road, was amazing, quiet, and pretty level. There was some washboarding, but if you take it slow, it is not a problem. Daily visitors included chipmunks, free-range cows, deer, moose, and hummingbirds! Be aware there is no Verizon cell service unless you have a booster. Starlink service was excellent.

Contributors Steve and Lisa Mullins
@nomadichobbyist

Alstrom Point

KANE COUNTY, UT

37.0589, -111.3647

Alstrom Point has been on our camping bucket list for several years. Driving to the campsite took us about two hours due to stream crossings, washboard roads, and some light off-road driving. To get as far as we went, four-wheel drive and reasonable ground clearance are definitely necessary. Alstrom Point is not too busy, and there are many places to camp. From our site, we saw other people camping in the distance, but it still felt very quiet and private.

The area is very exposed, so wind can be a factor. It definitely caused some tent campers in the area to cut their trip short.

We love finding camping spots that are remote and more challenging to get to. Because we work remotely, we are typically hanging out at the campsite for a good portion of the day. This also makes it necessary to pick a spot with a view and good cell service!

The Lake Powell area has plenty to keep you busy—from hiking and biking to swimming and boating, there's no shortage of activities if you like the outdoors.

Contributors Joe and Alli Strong
@grand_bee_fwc

Joshua Tree South BLM Land

CHIRIACO SUMMIT, CA

33.672317, -115.808922

One of our favorite boondocking experiences was right outside Joshua Tree National Park on Joshua Tree South BLM land. This spot is conveniently located off Interstate 10 West next to the south entrance of the park and only 30 minutes from Coachella, California.

On the weekends, the area can get busy, but there are plenty of established campsites for all size vehicles off the five-mile dirt road. The cell reception is one of the highlights of this spot, and we used Verizon and AT&T without a booster. There are no facilities, but the Cottonwood Visitor Center is six miles into the park, and it has water stations, bathrooms, and dumpsters.

This campground is the perfect place to call home while exploring Joshua Tree National Park, which has so much to offer, including trails for all levels, bouldering, climbing, backcountry roads, a cholla cactus forest, and amazing views. Along with this, the park is an International Dark Sky Park, so there are incredible views of the stars on clear nights.

Riley Day
@eccentric.travellers

Lone Rock Beach Campground

BIG WATER, UT

37.016, -111.5451

The water levels of Lake Powell may rise and fall, but Lone Rock Campground is the best basecamp for endless adventures. Even though it's not technically boondocking, Lone Rock offers a central location for many of Arizona and Utah's natural wonders. Part of the Glen Canyon National Recreation area, it costs $14 per night for primitive camping, and is well worth it.

Lone Rock offers beautiful views, with Lake Powell right outside your door, but its proximity to Page, Arizona, makes it a great stop for any number of activities. Just a short drive away are Upper and Lower Antelope Canyons, Horseshoe Bend, Lees Ferry, Glen Canyon Dam, Rainbow Bridge National Monument, Toadstool Hoodoos Trails, Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and so much more. Even if you don't head out on an adventure, you will have a great time sitting lakeside.

While any size RV can camp at Lone Rock, be careful where you're driving, because some spots are more compact than others. If you stick to the high areas and look out for where other RVs are parked, you shouldn't have any problems getting stuck.

Klondike Bluffs Road

MOAB, UT

GPS Location: 38.7536, -109.7296

Boondocking spots around this adventure hotspot can get competitive, but this BLM road is a little less crowded than nearby Willow Springs.

The road is bumpy, but the first mile is accessible for any size RV. Campsites are widely spaced among the desert scrub and marked by stone fire rings and level dirt. The immediate landscape is barren, but signature Moab red rocks and the distant La Sal mountain peaks provide scenic views.

This road is only 20 minutes from downtown Moab and Arches National Park. After seeing the famed Delicate Arch, you'll want to stop in town to get donuts and fried chicken sandwiches at Doughbird. Next, drive 40 minutes up the mesas to visit Dead Horse Point State Park and Canyonlands National Park. These vast, colorful landscapes are less crowded, but just as impressive as the neighboring sights.

The cell signal here is fairly reliable, thanks to the nearby airport. Don't be surprised if skydivers land right in your backyard! Enjoy this perfect basecamp for Moab adventures!

Contributor Rachael Lyons
@thetasteforadventure

Magnolia Beach Campground

PORT LAVACA, TX

28.5599, -96.537

If you're looking to camp on a beach without fear of high tides, this is your spot. Magnolia Beach Campground is located in a small fishing town outside of Port Lavaca. Since it's situated on a bay, you don't have to worry about the high tides and waking up to your RV underwater. The beach is made up of crushed shells, so it's like driving on gravel instead of sand. Larger RVs won't have any trouble getting here. It's one of our favorite places to camp for a few weeks every time we're in Texas.

While it does get busy sometimes, if you head out during the week, you'll find you have your pick of spots. There are public bathrooms and showers available, but if you are self contained, you can park farther away from the crowds. You can stay for up to 14 days, and since both AT&T and Verizon service are great here, you'll want to stay for every one of them. While there, be sure to stop into Buc-ee's for their famous Texas brisket or head to town and stock up at H-E-B.

New River Gorge National Park

MEADOW CREEK CAMPGROUND

37.79794, -80.92058

America's newest national park offers several first come, first served campgrounds, and they are all free! The Meadow Creek campground, located near the Sandstone Visitor Center, is only for car camping, but there are many in the park that are available for RVs as well.

New River Gorge is an incredibly accessible park, with roads above the canyon that have excellent hiking trails and views, as well as roads down to the bottom of the canyon for water access. The New River Gorge Bridge is one of the most photographed places in West Virginia, and once it was completed in 1977, visitors could finally cross the gorge easily. You can still access the narrow, winding road that goes down into the canyon and crosses at water level.

In addition to the unique natural features and ecological aspects of New River Gorge, this park also preserves Nuttallburg, a historic coal mining complex and town from the late 1800s. Today, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the most complete coal mine operations left in West Virginia.

Contributed by Greg Williams
@drifter.journey

McCarthy Road

CHITINA, ALASKA

61.52144, -144.33239

With a huge amount of land to explore and a ton of camping options, Alaska is a boondocker's paradise, and the McCarthy/Kennicott area is one of the most popular options. The roads in Alaska can vary in quality from year to year, and the road out to McCarthy is no exception. But if you decide to make the journey, you'll be rewarded with amazing views of the Chitina River.

As with most remote areas in Alaska, this campsite did not offer any services, including cell service. It is really only accessible to vans and truck campers, with room for one or two rigs. This camp is a great stopover on your way to McCarthy and Kennicott (sometimes spelled Kennecott). From here, you can explore the Root Glacier in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Kennecott Mines, a National Historic Landmark with incredible Alaskan history.

Do your research before attempting to take your rig on McCarthy Road. When the road is in bad shape, the journey can take much longer than your mapping app forecasts. Tour companies with good suspension can be hired if you just want to go out for the day.

Contributed by Greg Williams
@drifter.journey

Nomad View

BUFFALO GAP NATIONAL GRASSLAND, SD

43.8931, -102.2385

The sweeping canyon views are only matched by this boondocking area's accessibility. Dozens of campers, from tents to big rigs, line the grassy overlook to watch the sun play across the pink sandstone buttes. The skies, prairie, and views stretch forever from this vantage point, so be sure to schedule time to enjoy the spectacular sunsets.

Nomad View is located right outside Badlands National Park's Pinnacles entrance. Enjoy a scenic drive along Highway 240, then wander and take advantage of the park's open hike policy. Drive 10 minutes for resources in the tiny town of Wall, and don't forget to stop by Wall Drug for the famous five-cent coffee, extensive art collection, and kooky attractions.

Despite this location's popularity, campsites are plentiful, even in the summer season. A cell tower marks the camping area's entrance and provides excellent signal for digital nomads. Beware of high winds, and give the local cows space to graze.

Contributor Rachael Lyons
@thetasteforadventure

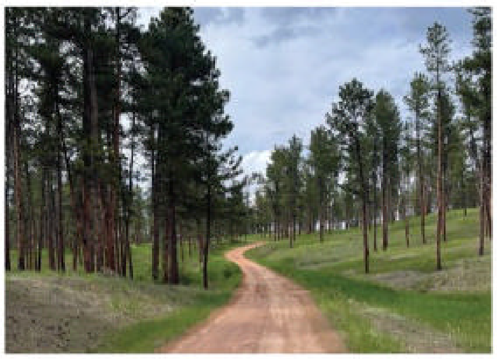
The beauty of the North Dakota Badlands and the Little Missouri Grasslands is breathtaking and a must-see stop if you're visiting North Dakota. Camping with a view of both—for free—makes the experience hard to beat! The Scoria Pit dispersed camping area is located inside the Little Missouri National Grassland, four miles outside the town of Medora and the entrance to Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

We were able to drive our 43-foot fifth wheel here and found there are several sites available with easy access to set up camp. There are many other large, flat sites, but the road continues for about one mile and eventually dead ends with no easy place for big rigs to turn around, so be careful.

There are no water, trash, or sani-dump services provided here, but Medora has several campgrounds that allow this for a small fee. Both AT&T and Verizon had strong, solid signals.

Watching the sunset over the badlands and stargazing into the dark skies of North Dakota is an epic experience, so do not skip this place!

Contributors Meagan and Joseph Hinson
@thathinsonlife



Red Shale Campground in Custer National Forest

ASHLAND, MT

45.5688, -106.1463

Red Shale is a small, free, well-groomed campground in the Custer National Forest. It's right off Highway 212 in Ashland, Montana, and tucked nicely away in the forest.

We have a 43-foot fifth wheel and were excited to find the area is big rig friendly. The campground is split into two loops, with 14 sites. We stayed in site five in the lower loop, and it was quiet and serene with an incredible view of the night sky.

Each site has a fire pit, a large wooden picnic table, and tons of privacy, so you feel alone even though others are nearby. The data and cell signal are solid for both AT&T and Verizon.

We loved our time here so much that we ended up staying two extra nights, but you can stay up to 16 nights here for free. Red Shale Campground is located about two hours northwest of Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming and about four hours northwest of the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Contributors Meagan and Joseph Hinson
@thathinsonlife

Sand Mine Road

OVERTON, NV

36.4734, -114.4396

The Valley of Fire State Park is a dreamland of red sandstone formations, but it's difficult to nab a campsite inside the park. Instead, drive a few miles to Sand Mine Road, which skirts a canyon with private desert sites along its rim. RVs of any size can get access, and it's less crowded than nearby Snowbird Mesa.

The sites are incredibly private, with vast distances between each. Kick back and enjoy the colorful sunset stretching across the wide desert sky and over mountain peaks, then head to the state park to explore the red Aztec sandstone formations, melted ice cream-patterned stone, and ancient petroglyphs. Head 15 minutes south to enjoy fishing and boating on Lake Mead.

Catch cell signal at Sand Mine Road, though congestion makes it shaky. Groceries, laundry, and water are in the nearby town of Overton.

Contributor Rachael Lyons
@thetasteforadventure

Pipeline Road Dispersed Camping

IRONWOOD FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT

MARANA, AZ

32.3747, -111.3882

It seemed like there were so many boondocking spots in the greater Tucson area, it was hard to choose one. We ended up at Pipeline Road, and it was a great choice! We set up basecamp here to visit Saguaro National Park, and with so many saguaro cacti in the area, we almost didn't need to leave.

Any size RV will have no trouble finding a spot. While there were other RVs in the area, our caravan had no problem setting up a spot without neighbors. The Arizona sunsets are always spectacular, and with Tucson just 30 minutes away, it was easy to pop over for supplies or a night out. We found both AT&T and Verizon cell service to be great here.

Saguaro National Park is split up into two districts—the Tucson Mountain District (West) is a short 16-mile drive, and the Rincon Mountain District (East) is 47 miles away.

Soda Springs Road

RIMROCK, AZ

34.6741, -111.7280

This boondocking area on Soda Springs Road is at the south end of the Coconino National Forest. Access from I-17 onto FR-618 is smooth sailing, and FR-618 is a well-graded dirt road. Soda Springs Road is mostly decent, but it's not recommended if it is or has been raining. The gate to this road may even be closed in bad weather.

There are several spots available for big rigs, and also a couple of smaller spots suitable for RVs less than 25 feet. The dirt trail was quite rutted but achievable with patience. There are other spots farther along for smaller rigs as well. Cell service was good on Verizon, but painful on AT&T.

The proximity to Sedona, Cottonwood, and Camp Verde makes this an ideal base to explore the area and check off a couple of red rock hikes. The Bell Trail (#13) trailhead was a nice hike of nearly nine miles from our door to The Crack at Wet Beaver Creek.

Contributor Marie Casey
@awesome.journies

Willard Springs Road - Coconino National Forest

MUNDS, AZ

34.9704, -111.6926

With easy access off Interstate 17, Willard Springs Road is a great location to set up for a week or two and enjoy the Coconino National Forest. RVs of any size will find it easy to pick a spot to set up. The area is vast, with your choice of spots among the pines. We stayed during Thanksgiving and found it easy to take the 25-minute drive up the interstate to Flagstaff for supplies.

Both AT&T and Verizon have cell service here, so you may find it the perfect basecamp. Visit Sedona, just a 50-minute drive away, and if you are up for a longer commute without the RV, the Grand Canyon is about two hours away. There are also many great hikes in the greater Flagstaff area, but we enjoyed walking around the forest and just hanging out in this beautiful spot in the mountains of Northern Arizona.

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There's no doubt that the rock 'n' roll genre has contributed some of the best road trip songs in history. From "Sweet Home Alabama" to "Highway to Hell," Spinditty's 100 Best Road Trip Rock Songs playlist will have you rocking the whole way to your next destination.

LISTEN: rootlessliving.com/rockplaylist

COUNTRY COLLECTION

For those wide open spaces and flyover states, POPSUGAR Smart Living's Country Road Trip Playlist has old and new songs that are perfect for every country music fan.

LISTEN: rootlessliving.com/countryplaylist

CHILL VIBES

When you're in a mellow mood and are looking for music to match, try out Spotify's Chill Vibes playlist, which includes 150 songs and eight-plus hours of playtime.

LISTEN: rootlessliving.com/chillplaylist

INSPIRE WANDERLUST

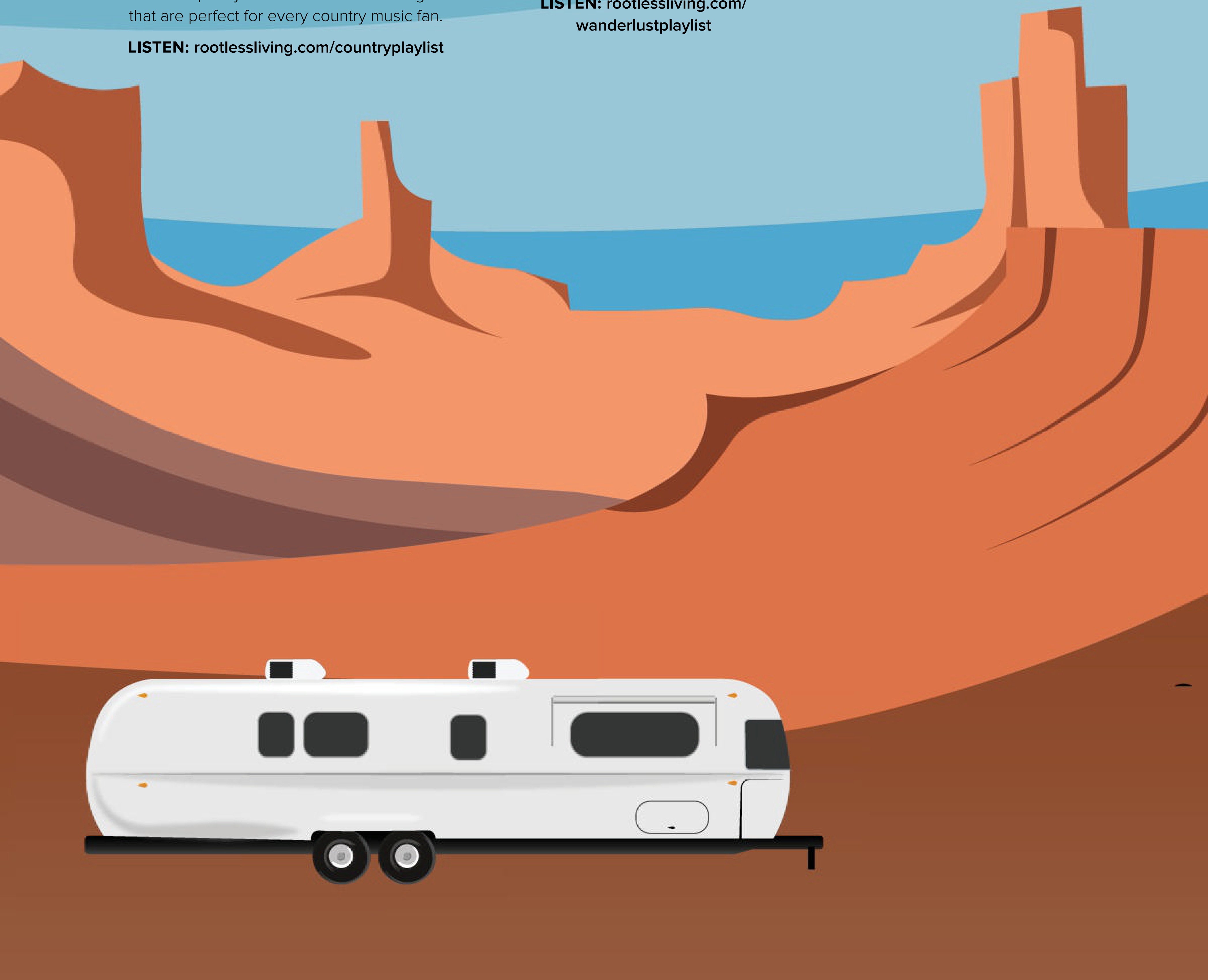
A compilation of indie, folk, and pop, Indie Folk Central's Wanderlust; Travel & Road Trip Songs playlist will surely make you want to hit the road and seek adventure.

LISTEN: rootlessliving.com/wanderlustplaylist

FOR THE KIDS

If the cartoony playlists and movie soundtracks drive you crazy, try Are We There Yet, A Road Trip Playlist compiled by Fatherly.com.

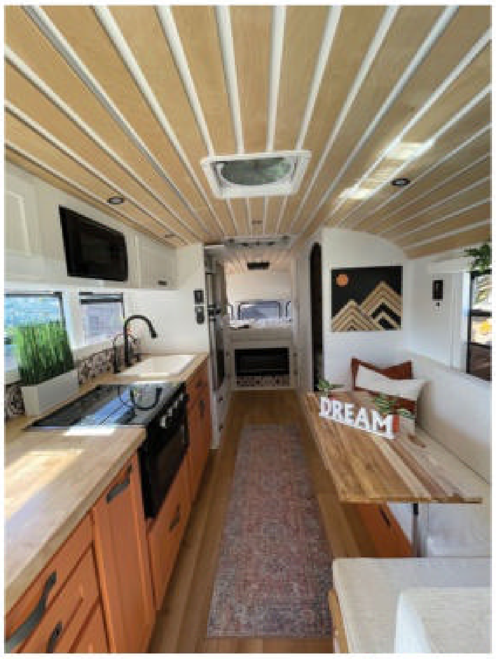
LISTEN: rootlessliving.com/playlistforkids



Am I Too Old for Vanlife?

Retiree Vanlifers Tell All

By Chris Lowe



HERE ARE OUR TOP 10 REASONS WHY VANLIFE IS GREAT AT ANY AGE:

1. You can park in a regular parking spot.
2. You can park in a regular parking spot.
3. You don't have to stay with family.
4. If you're stuck in traffic, you can make a sandwich and use your own bathroom.
5. You can go wherever you want, whenever you want—especially true for retirees.
6. Gas prices are going down, and hotel prices are going up. You'll never need another hotel room, but you can park for free in some of their lots.
7. You'll meet new friends wherever you go, but if that's not for you, that's okay too.
8. If you get tired while driving, you can pull over and take a nap.
9. You'll feel alive and excited about road trips, especially with a fridge full of snacks.
10. You can see the whole country while having your home on wheels with you.

ALTHOUGH THE VAN travel craze really took off in the millennial age bracket, inspiring us with their beautiful photos and adventures, the 50-plus crowd eventually caught the wanderlust bug and started traveling in vans too. I'm over 55. Is vanlife for me? The answer is yes, and here's why.

My partner, Bobby, and I are from Southern California, and built our own van in September of 2020. Through blood, sweat, and tears, we created our perfect adventure van, complete with a bathroom, kitchen, and king-size bed. As we shared our van build, others started asking us to build their vans, and our new company was born. People would call us boujee in our big Mercedes van, which led to our business name, Boujee Builds.

Because of our age bracket, we started attracting friends and clients in their 50s and 60s. They tended to be entrepreneurs or retired, having worked hard for 40 years while raising kids. Once the nest was empty, they found themselves with an open schedule and ready for freedom.

When asked how they envisioned their van, most said they wanted it to feel like home, complete with a kitchen, bathroom, and at least a queen-size bed. At this point in their lives, our clients knew exactly what they wanted. We spoke to several of our clients and fellow vanlife friends, asking them to share some of their favorite aspects of vanlife.

Michelle (60 years old) is a solo, part-time traveler who is retired. She said, "My favorite part is the freedom to go when and where I want, with the ability to explore. I'm not getting any younger, and if I kept letting fear get the best of me, I would have never done it!"

Tammy and Eric (60 years old) are both retired educators and part-time vanlifers. They love that they can both drive the van, as the bigger Class A RVs were intimidating. "It fits in a regular parking space, so it's easy to go shopping and to the beach. It drives like a minivan, it's quick to set up, and it's stealthy if we need to boondock," they said.

Ginny and Fred (65 years old) are also retired and said, "We are selling our big house in Long Island and moving to a small place in California. This will be our home base as we adventure in our van and visit family across the country. It's our dream to travel this way, with the comforts of home."

The aspect we personally love about vanlife is that you never meet a stranger, especially if they also have a van. We've experienced an immediate bond and feeling of community, no matter what the age gap is. We find ourselves hiking, paddleboarding, or parking beachside for a sunset, instead of just sitting in a house watching life happen on a TV screen.

We can't imagine traveling any other way now. Once you try it, you'll be hooked.

If you've been considering vanlife, give it a try or go check out some in person at tiny living and vanlife festivals. Life is about making memories, and you'll make the best ones when you step, or drive, past your fears. Happy travels! ■

Chris and Bobby share their van builds and adventures on Instagram **@happilytravelingeverafter**.

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Adventure WITH COMPROMISE

Marital Balance in Death Valley National Park

By Lisa Paulos

"I LOVE YOU, but you exhaust me," said my husband, Michael. I could already see the dread on his face as I excitedly suggested another adventure-based trip. He knows my insatiable need to explore, but for Michael, vacations are a means of rest and relaxation. Nothing about me filling our vacation days with activities from sunrise to sunset excites him. For the two of us, travel means different things and serves two very different purposes.

They say marriage is about compromise and balance—a give and take. When you have different travel styles, traveling with your spouse requires the same consideration. With Michael's simple statement, I was well aware that there was no way he was going to happily go along on another jam-packed trip. My sheer excitement for adventure just wasn't convincing enough. In 14 years together, we've experienced several vacations where neither of us got what we needed to enjoy ourselves, and this time around, we wanted to intentionally plan a hybrid trip filled with both adventure and rest.

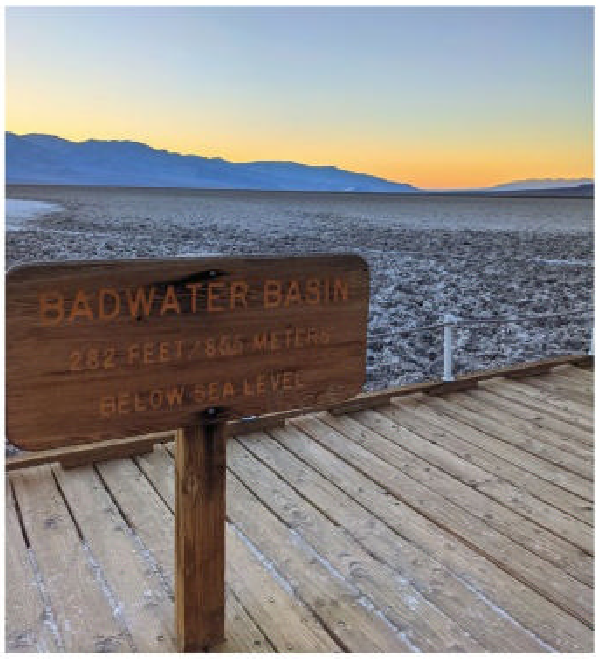
Death Valley National Park offered a perfect harmony of the two. Filled with miles and miles of trails, stunning views, and geological wonders, I had plenty to do. And the park also offers something no other national park does—a golf course, Michael's favorite space to relax!

Death Valley was also a bucket-list destination for both of us! I got to check off another national park—I'm at 36 and counting—and Michael got to visit a unique golf course, as Death Valley's Furnace Creek Golf Course claims the title of "Lowest Golf Course on Earth."

Rated as one of America's 50 toughest courses by Golf Digest, knocking out a round at a course that proudly advertises itself as the driest and hottest place on Earth was going to be a challenge. Upon arriving at Death Valley, we grabbed the first tee time for the following morning to enjoy the palm- and tamarisk-framed fairways.

A few tips we learned on our round:

- **Sun covering and water are a must.** It may not match your golf attire, but a wide-brim hat is absolutely required to truly enjoy the experience. Wear sunscreen and bring extra water!
- **Grab a memento for your achievement.** The shop offers souvenirs touting the "lowest golf course on Earth" claim to fame, which are certainly worth showing off to friends on your next round.
- **Enjoy the experience!** Neither of us played exceptionally well, but we tried not to focus on the good shots versus the bad shots. Instead, we reminded ourselves, "We are at the lowest golf course in the world—that's cool."



We checked off the one-of-a-kind golf course with a very hot, very slow round, which was far from relaxing for me, but made Michael happy.

It was my turn now—adventure awaited us!

For me, a national park visit always starts with a trip to the visitor center. We enjoyed the 20-minute informational video about the history of the park and learned a few fun facts at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center.

- Death Valley is more than 3 million acres and was designated a national park in 1994.
- As the story goes, a group of pioneers lost here in 1849 named the area Death Valley for its forbidding conditions and desolation.
- Death Valley is a Gold Tier Status International Dark Sky Park, meaning it offers some of the best stargazing in America. Tip: Give your eyes 30 minutes to adjust to the dark sky to truly enjoy it.

Given the summer heat, our exploration of the park was limited to the sites that are accessible via the car or short walks. A few of our favorites included:

Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes: The dunes are viewable from your vehicle in the parking lot, but a short walk gives you views of sand dunes that reach 100 feet tall. Be careful—the sand gets very hot!

Badwater Basin: At 282 feet below sea level, this is the lowest point in North America. Take a walk out onto the expansive salt flats, catch a sunset for breathtaking views, and treat yourself to a sky full of stars shimmering above the salt pan if you stay until dark.

Devils Golf Course: This is not to be confused with the actual golf course in the park! A short drive on a gravel-graded road will lead you to a vast sighting of halite salt crystals. Devils Golf Course was named after a line in an early NPS guidebook stating that "only the devil could play golf" on its surface.

Artists Drive: This is a beautiful, scenic, 9-mile loop through rainbow-colored hills. The blues, greens, and pinks are caused by the erosion and oxidation of different metals, such as iron, mica, and manganese.

Zabriskie Point: A popular place for both sunrises and sunsets, Zabriskie Point provides an elevated view of the park's badlands below. It's a short quarter-mile hike up a paved, accessible trail and a great first stop to grasp the vastness and size of Death Valley.

The adventure-based portion of our trip had sufficiently exhausted us. Our time at Death Valley was wrapping up, but not before Michael snuck in another round of golf the final morning, hitting the links just after sunrise as I slept in—another great example of harmonious compromise in both marriage and travel! Whatever you or your partner are seeking, Death Valley National Park is worth the visit. ■

Follow Lisa on Instagram **@lisa_roams** for more fun travels with her husband, Michael.

5 Underrated National Parks

By Kathryn Frazer

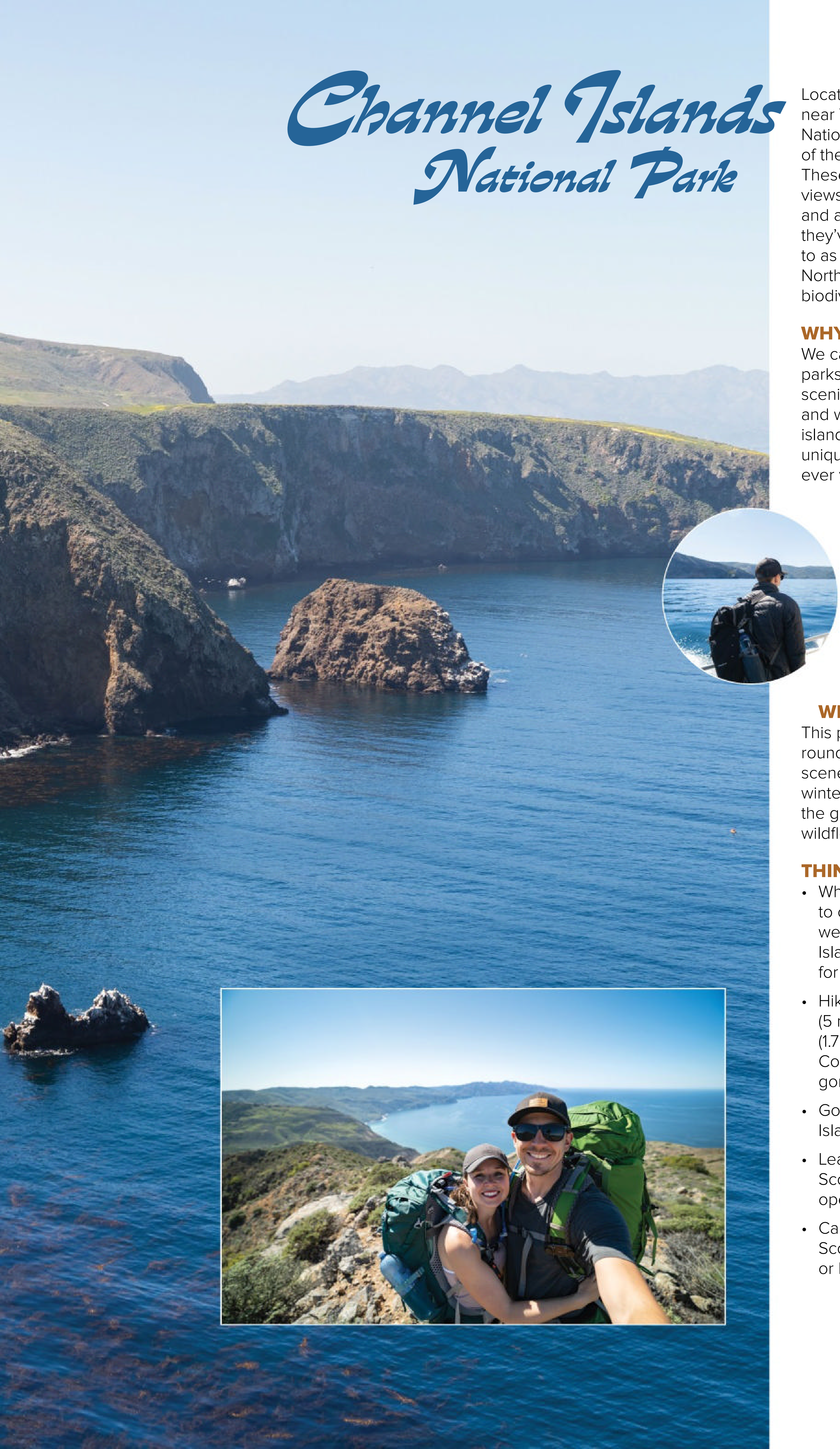
WE HAVE BEEN to 48 of the 63 national parks in the United States, and while it's true that the busiest parks are popular for a reason, some of our favorite experiences have been at the lesser-known parks.

From taking a boat to an island to walking on a glacier to crawling through a cave, these parks may have less hype, but they still offer impressive scenery, exciting trails, and fun experiences that make them well worth a visit.

Channel Islands National Park

Located off the California coast near Ventura, Channel Islands National Park consists of five of the eight Channel Islands. These islands offer coastal views, wildlife, history lessons, and a variety of activities, and they've even been referred to as the Galapagos of North America due to their biodiversity.

Channel Islands National Park



Located off the California coast near Ventura, Channel Islands National Park consists of five of the eight Channel Islands. These islands offer coastal views, wildlife, history lessons, and a variety of activities, and they've even been referred to as the Galapagos of North America due to their biodiversity.

WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT

We can't think of many other parks where you get to enjoy a scenic boat ride, see dolphins and whales, and hike on an island. It's one of the most unique national parks we've ever visited!

HOW TO GET THERE

The Channel Islands require a boat or plane ride to get to, with the most common option being a cruise with Island Packers Cruises out of Ventura.

WHEN TO VISIT

This park is great to visit year-round, but for the most colorful scenery, we recommend late winter or early spring, when the grass is green and the wildflowers are blooming!

THINGS TO DO

- While there are five islands to choose from in the park, we recommend Santa Cruz Island, which is the largest, for first time visitors.
- Hike the Potato Harbor trail (5 miles), Cavern Point Loop (1.7 miles), or Smugglers Cove trail (7.7 miles) for gorgeous views.
- Go kayaking with Channel Islands Adventure Company.
- Learn some history at Scorpion Ranch, which operated in the late 1800s.
- Camp on the island at either Scorpion Canyon (25 sites) or Del Norte (4 sites).

Canyonlands

National Park—Needles District

Utah's Mighty Five national parks are no secret; in fact, they tend to be some of the most-visited parks in the U.S. After visiting all five, one of our biggest highlights was the Needles district in Canyonlands National Park.

Most people who visit Canyonlands only visit the Island in the Sky district, right by Moab. For those willing to drive a bit, you'll find stunning scenery and fewer people in the Needles district, which is known for its colorful spires of Cedar Mesa Sandstone.

WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT

If you want to experience the otherworldly scenery of Southern Utah's parks, with fewer crowds, but still relatively close to civilization, this is about as good as it gets!

HOW TO GET THERE

The Needles district is located about two hours southwest of Moab and it's an easy drive to get there.

WHEN TO VISIT

Summer temperatures easily top 100 degrees in Southern Utah, so visit in the winter or spring, when temperatures are more bearable.

THINGS TO DO

- Hike the Druid Arch to Chesler Park Loop (16.6 miles), which includes walking among the needles, some rock scrambling, and an up-close look at the Druid Arch.
- Walk the short Cave Spring trail (0.6 miles) to see an old cowboy camp and pictographs.
- Drive through the park and stop at overlooks, like the Big Spring Canyon Overlook and Wooden Shoe Arch Overlook.
- Hike the easier Roadside Ruin (0.3 miles) and Pothole Point (0.6 miles) trails.

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is one of eight national parks in Alaska, and at 13.2 million acres, it's the largest national park in the U.S. Often overshadowed by Denali and Kenai Fjords National Parks—the two easiest Alaska national parks to access—Wrangell-St.Elias is loaded with adventures for all types of explorers. Here you can find nine of the 16 highest peaks in the U.S., copper mining history, and one of the largest concentrations of glaciers in North America.

WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT

Because it's harder to get to, this park tends to attract fewer visitors, while still offering much of the scenery Alaska is known for, such as glaciers and epic mountains. Bonus: dogs are allowed on trails!

HOW TO GET THERE

Wrangell-St. Elias is predominantly wilderness that requires a plane to access, but there are two areas that are reachable by car—Kennicott (6.5 hours from Anchorage) and Nabesna Road (4.5 hours from Anchorage).

Nabesna Road is a 42-mile (one way) unpaved road that takes you to the northern area of the park, with campgrounds and trails, but limited services.

Kennicott (sometimes spelled Kennecott) is the most popular area to visit and requires a 60-mile (one way) drive down the unpaved McCarthy Road to just outside of McCarthy, where you'll either have to walk or take a shuttle 5 miles (one way) to Kennicott.

WHEN TO VISIT

This park is best to visit in the summer months, when the trails are free of snow and facilities are open.

THINGS TO DO

- We only visited the Kennicott area of the park, which has enough to keep you busy for a few days!
- Visit the charming, tiny town of McCarthy and eat at The Potato.
- Explore the Kennecott Mines! You can tour some buildings on your own, but to go inside the iconic mill building, you'll need to book a 2-hour tour.
- Hike to the Root Glacier (5.7 miles) and walk on the glacier! You can either hire a guide or walk on it by yourself, but make sure you have microspikes to do so.
- Go on an ice climbing excursion with a guide.
- Hike to the Bonanza Mine (8.3 miles), a steep trail with 4,000 feet of elevation gain that has great views and mine ruins.
- Take a flightseeing tour.
- Camp overlooking the Root Glacier, which requires a 2-mile hike from Kennicott.

Big Bend
National Park

Located in West Texas, far from any major city, is Big Bend National Park. Despite growing up in Texas, this park is unlike anything we have seen in the state! It's home to the Chisos Mountains, desert terrain, hot springs, the Rio Grande river, canyons, and some of the darkest skies you'll ever see.

WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT

This park is very remote and is a true escape from civilization. Plus, it's located right on the U.S. and Mexico border, and you can even cross into Mexico to grab some tacos!

HOW TO GET THERE

Big Bend National Park isn't the easiest park to get to—the closest city is El Paso, which is about a 5.5 hour drive away. You can expect to drive 6.5 hours from San Antonio or 7.5 hours from Austin.

WHEN TO VISIT

It's no secret that Texas experiences hot summers, so we'd save this park for a fall, winter, or spring visit.

THINGS TO DO

- Hike the Lost Mine trail (4.8 miles), Window trail (5.2 miles), or Boquillas Canyon trail (1.2 miles).
- For something more difficult, hike the South Rim up to Emory Peak (15.4 miles), the highest point in the park.
- Visit Santa Elena Canyon, which is right on the U.S. and Mexico border. You can kayak here, too!
- Drive the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive for sweeping views.
- Soak in a hot spring in the remains of an old bath house.
- Cross the border into Mexico in Boquillas. Don't forget your passport!

Pinnacles National Park

Pinnacles National Park is the smallest of California's nine national parks, but don't let that fool you—it packs a big punch! Famous for its rock pinnacles, California condors, and caves, you can experience everything in just one day. We hadn't heard much about Pinnacles before visiting, but we left the park wondering why more people don't talk about it!

WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT

This park surprised us with its variety of scenery. You won't get bored hiking here; there is a new feature or view around almost every corner!

HOW TO GET THERE

Pinnacles is located in Central California, south of San Jose, making it very convenient to get to. The park has eastern and western entrances, which are not connected by a road, and during our visit we explored the western side, which we recommend for your first visit.

WHEN TO VISIT

We suggest visiting between the fall and spring, when the weather is milder and you have a better chance of experiencing the caves. The upper cave is closed most of the year, minus a few weeks in March, and the lower cave is closed between mid-May and mid-July while the bats raise their young.

THINGS TO DO

Hiking the Condor Gulch, High Peaks, and Bear Gulch Reservoir trail (5.5 miles) is the best thing to do on the west side. This trail takes you among the pinnacles and has mountain views, a reservoir, and unique features, like steps built into rocks and dark caves to explore. It's one of the most diverse and fun trails we've hiked!

While national parks are getting busier every year, if you stray away from the more well-known parks, you'll still be able to find some solitude and experience hidden gems that are often overlooked! ■

Find more travel guides on Kathryn's website, adventuresofaplusk.com, and on Instagram **@adventuresofaplusk**.

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RV PANEL

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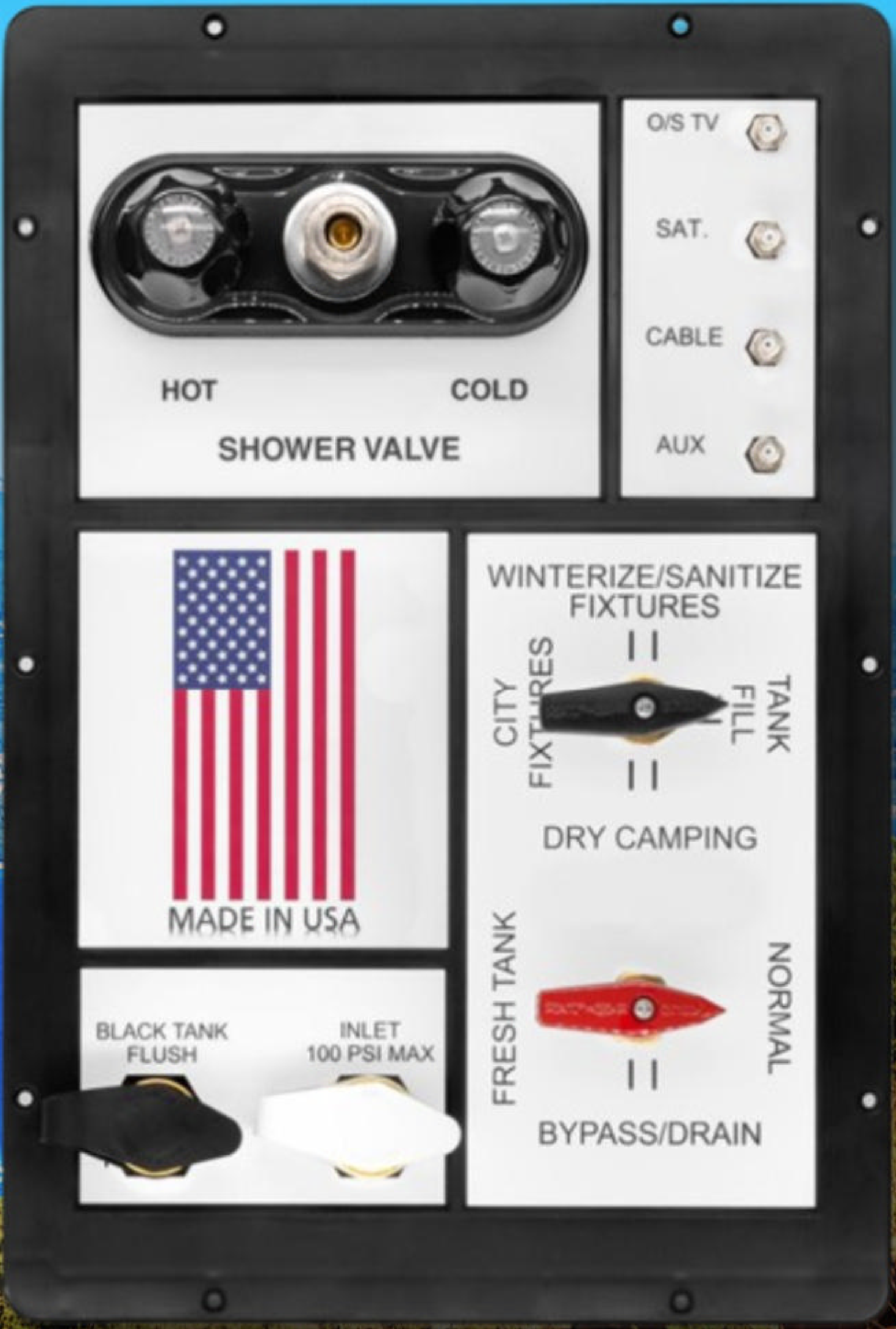
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but not
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Twice-monthly community updates for the small desert town of Night Vale, where every conspiracy theory is true. Turn on your radio and hide with this ongoing radio show.

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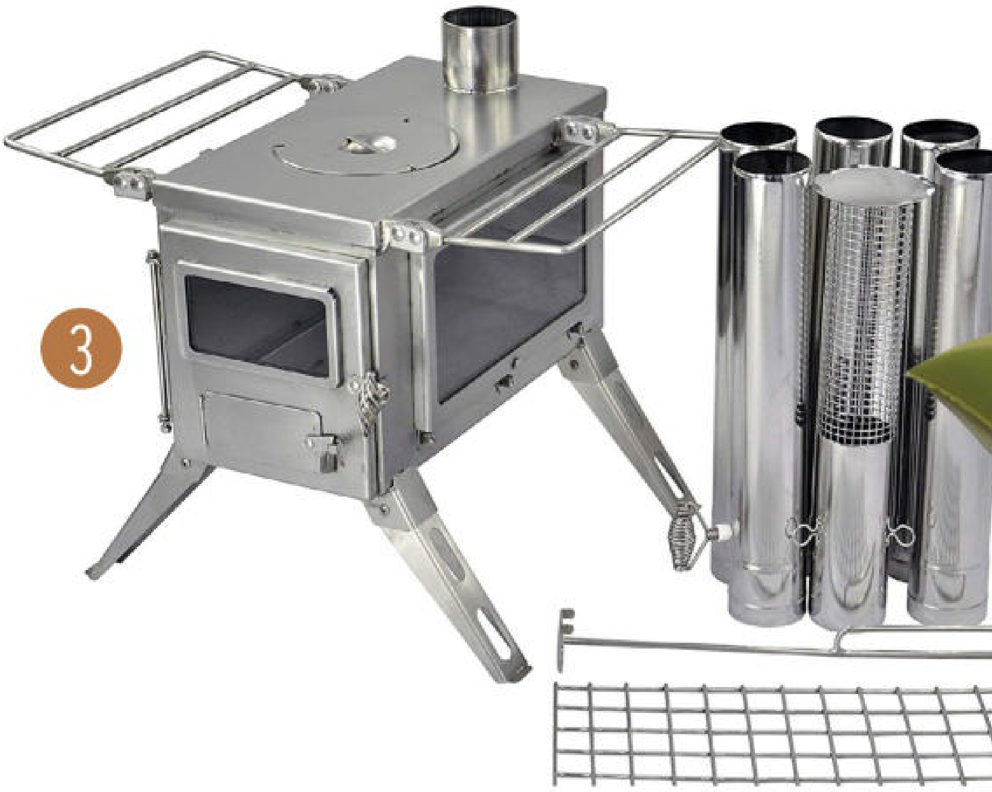

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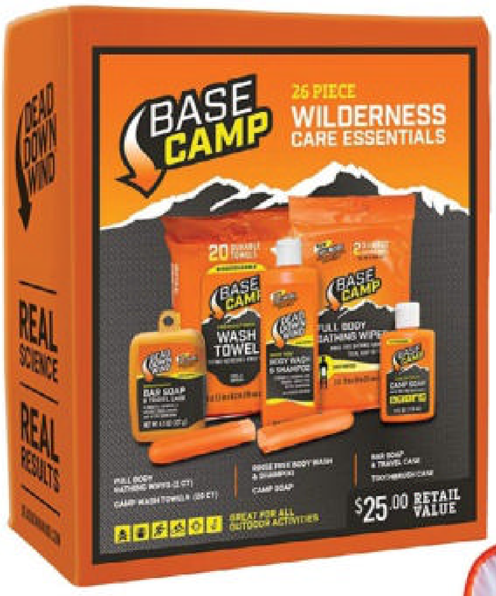

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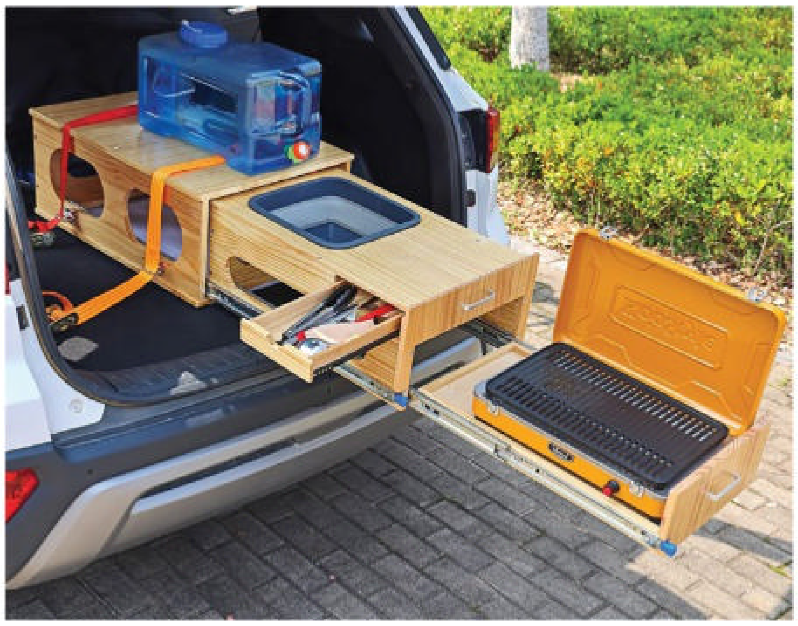

8

1. FLASHLIGHT GLOVES

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This personal cooking system is light, compact, and makes boiling water or heating up other liquids like soup for meals easy to do while boondocking, camping, or hiking. A convenient carrying case comes with it.

3. WINNERWELL NOMAD VIEW MEDIUM TENT STOVE

This stainless steel wood burning stove is portable, compact, and perfect for heat and cooking off-grid. Additional accessories like an attachable water tank for boiling water or melting snow are also available.

4. 30-GALLON AQUATANK 2

Hauling extra water with you means enjoying staying out in your favorite boondocking spot longer. These water storage tanks are heavy-duty and available in different capacities starting at 15 gallons.

5. BASE CAMP HYGIENE KIT

This 26-piece kit includes rinse free body wash and shampoo, full body bathing wipes, soap and toothbrush travel cases and more, making it perfect for staying clean while living off-grid.

6. QUIK DRY TOWEL PACK

These space saving, quick dry towels are perfect for life on the road. Each towel in the pack of four is easily identifiable by edging of a different color so you'll always know whose towel is whose.

7. CAMCO STEERABLE HOLDING TANK

Increase your time boondocking without having to empty tanks with this portable, back-up wastewater tank. Available in different capacities, from 15 to 36 gallons, this tank is a best-seller.

8. OVERLANDING KITCHEN

Great for leaving your rig behind and heading out on exploratory trips, this camp kitchen is space saving and fits perfectly in the back of an SUV.

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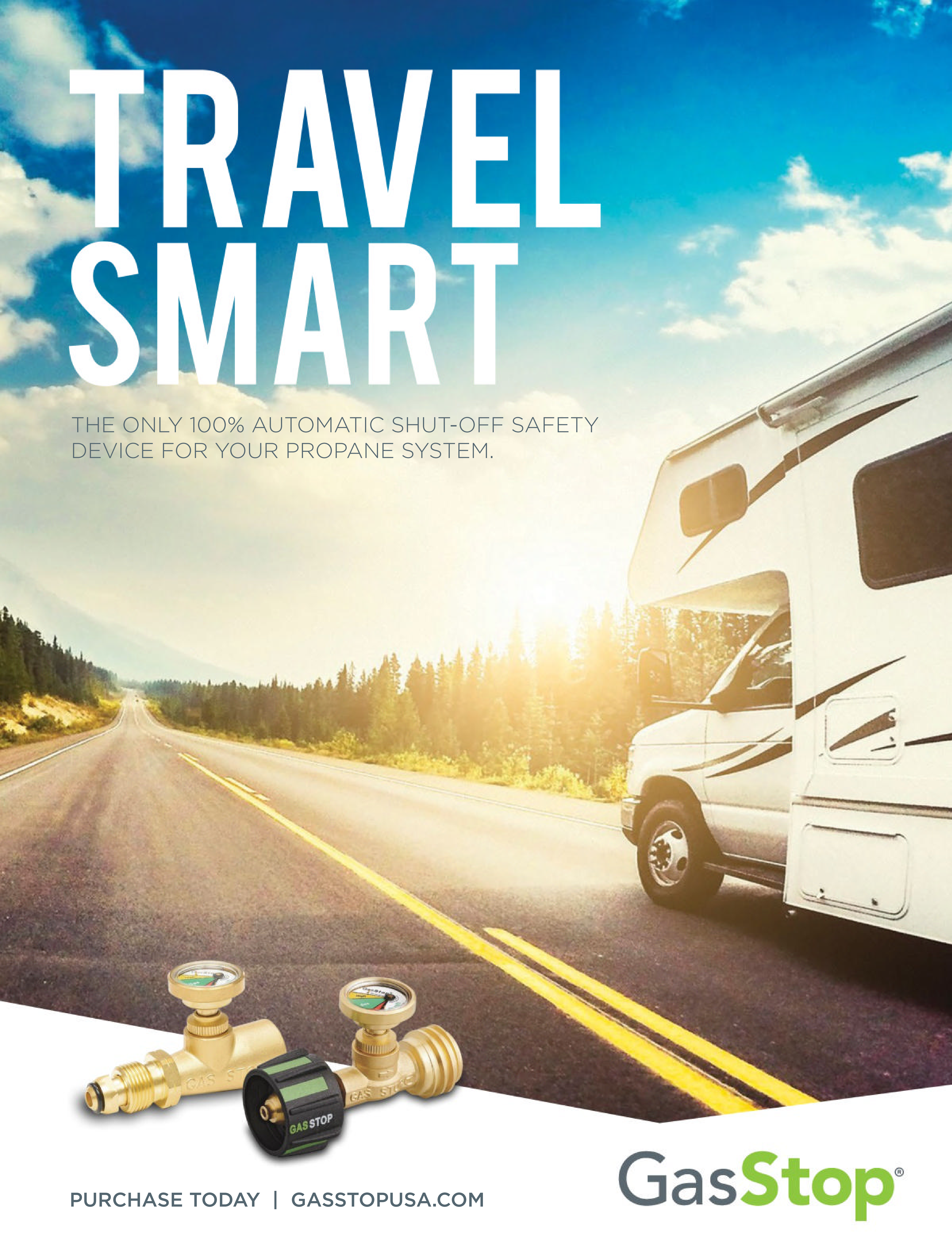
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